

The Editors: CLINTON IN HAITI

COMMONWEAL

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October 7, 1994

BOOKS

PAUL A. SRACIC on
two views of the
Constitution

PAUL GEDIMAN
on David
Grossman

GEORGE HIGGINS on
Catholic social
thought

Screen:
RICHARD ALLEVA
An autopsy of
'Natural Born
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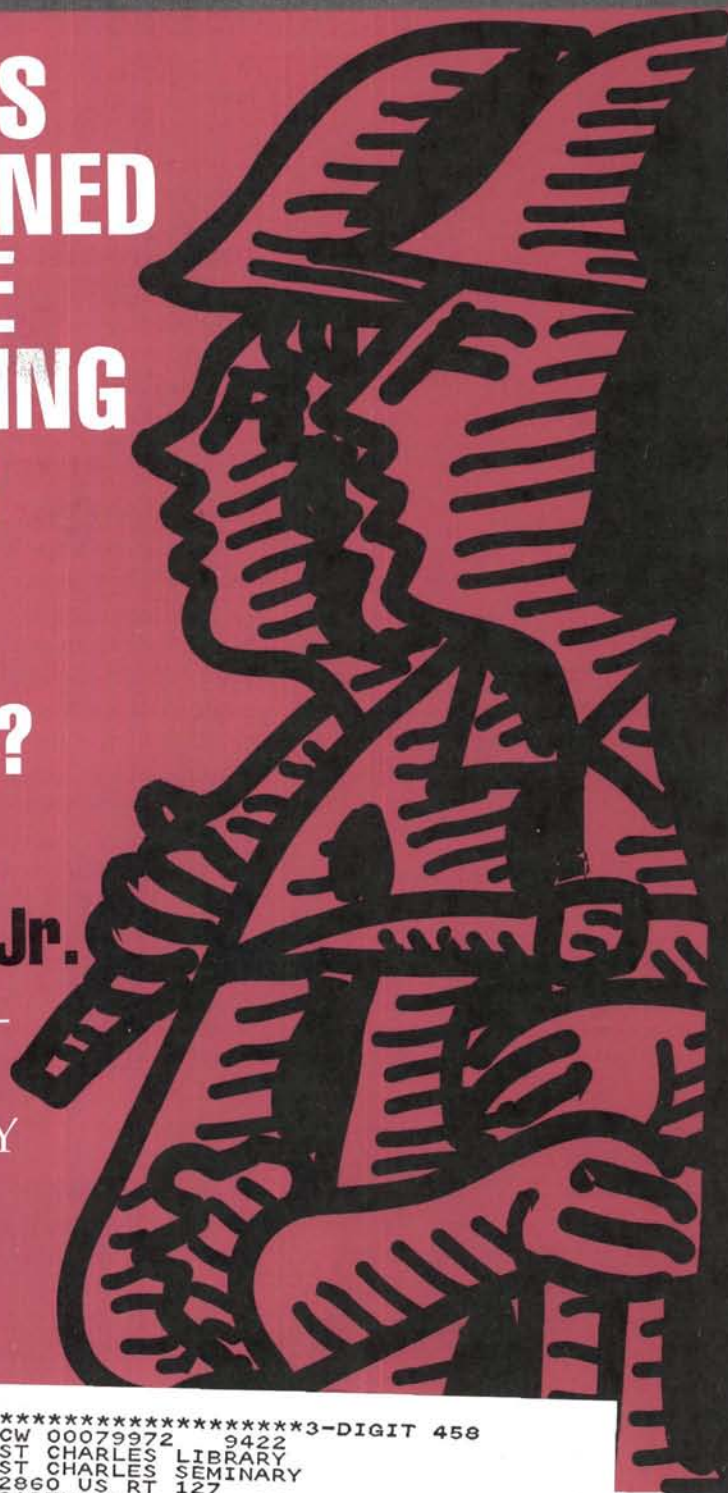
The Last Word:
DENNIS DOYLE's
prodigal son

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE WORKING CLASS & who let it happen?

**DAVID R.
CARLIN, Jr.**

**COURTNEY
MURRAY
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abortion &
euthanasia

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Whitmore**



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CORRESPONDENCE

Thanks a little

Fayetteville, N.C.

To the Editors: I don't remember how often I've resolved not to renew my subscription. Over and over, articles with their liberal and antipapal slants have infuriated me. Yet, every so often you print something that absolutely enthalls and keeps me renewing.

Kenneth Woodward's "Ushering in the Age of the Laity" [September 9] is just such an article. Even though a professional crank and chronic critic, I found myself agreeing with most (but never all, of course) of what Mr. Woodward had to say. For once, I'll forgo the pleasure of nit-picking.

You are to be congratulated, but not too heartily of course, for including this article.

GEORGE STEWART

Thanks a lot

St. Louis, Mo.

To the Editors: What a splendid article by Kenneth Woodward! I am sending copies, filled with underlinings and notes of agreement, to a number of friends, clerical and lay. Woodward is, in just about all respects, my kind of Catholic. I rise up and call him blessed!

(REV.) JOHN JAY HUGHES

Dark? Subjective? Hey!

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Could you explain, please, the meaning of the following exchange in the interview of David Plante by Paul Baumann, "Seeing Through a Glass, Darkly" [August 19]:

Correction The author's identification accompanying Kenneth Woodward's "Ushering in the Age of the Laity" [September 9] incorrectly said that the article was adapted from a convocation address given at the "Chicago Theological Union." The correct name of the institution is the "Catholic Theological Union at Chicago." We regret the error.

"PLANTE: ... There is in perhaps the greatest classical American literature a darkness which is final and utter and from which there is no redemption...."

"BAUMANN: Do you find that to be Protestant somehow?"

"PLANTE: The darkness? Absolutely...."

And can you also enlighten me about the source of the following global statement:

"PLANTE: ... Where Protestantism is subjective—God is internal, subjective, you go in—for Catholics, God is objective. He's out there. He doesn't need me to exist."

This characterization of Protestantism would certainly come as a surprise to, say, Karl Barth.

DONALD KRAUS

The writer is senior editor with Oxford University Press.

The author replies:

Enlightenment follows.

David Plante's remarks were edited, lending a certain abruptness to the discussion. Still, noting the connection between the spiritual pessimism or "darkness" of classic nineteenth-century American literature, evident in Melville and Hawthorne for example, and the sometimes severe sense of God's judgment—or even God's absence—felt by the heirs to Calvinism is hardly a novel observation. I refer Mr. Kraus to the literary critics Leslie Fiedler and F.O. Matthiessen.

And surely the traditional Catholic sense of the objective presence of God in the sacraments and in the church can be contrasted to Protestantism's critique of Roman sacramental practice, its celebration of individual conscience, and to liberal Protestantism's modern skepticism about the exercise of church authority.

Karl Barth surprised? I don't think so. Wasn't it the spiritual inadequacy of liberal Protestant "subjectivism" that Barth so brilliantly exposed?

I thank Mr. Kraus for his close reading of the interview, but I am surprised by his irascible tone. I'm sure David Plante's remarks were not meant as an attack on the

coherence of classic Protestant theology or on the faith of Protestants.

PAUL BAUMANN

The fiddler obeys well

Elkhorn, Wis.

To the Editors: Most of the discussion of health-care reform neglects the first principle of the dance hall (and the marketplace): He who pays the fiddler calls the tune. There is no reason why the medical insurers should want cost controls: their payments are a percentage of the charges. Meantime, the cost of the paperwork they do amounts to 25 percent of expenditures for medical services. There's real money for some in the present system, and they'll make sure things stay as they are.

JOSEPH-LOUIS GOLDIN

Why health costs rise

Toledo, Ohio

To the Editors: It has been pointed out that the chief cause of the high cost of medical care is the willingness of insurers in the '60s to pay for almost everything. At

(Continued on page 29)

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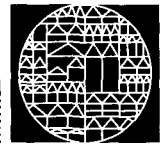
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COMMONWEAL

Give it a chance

No sooner did President Bill Clinton announce the imminent invasion of Haiti than he was attacked. No sooner did he call off the invasion than he was attacked. No sooner was the Carter-Powell-Nunn agreement with General Cedras made public than Clinton was attacked. The rules of engagement prohibited U.S. soldiers from stopping Haitian police atrocities; Clinton was criticized. The rules were modified, and the first U.S. casualty that results—as it must—will bring another round of protest.

U.S.-Haitian relations are a conundrum, a problem admitting of no satisfactory solution, as we may well see. Clinton's turn from invasion to negotiation to cooperative occupation was chalked up to his flip-flop style. But for a president so obviously reluctant to invade—as his September 15 press conference conveyed—the chance for last-minute negotiations was a chance not to be missed. That Cedras and company got a better deal than they deserved should not obscure the fact that neither American nor Haitian lives were lost as U.S. forces landed. That is no small achievement. Critics of the down-to-the-wire agreement argue that a military invasion would have swept the decks and created firmer ground on which to "restore" democracy. That's doubtful. If something like democracy is to take root in Haiti it is as likely to come with a peaceful arrival as a bloody one. It will be a long haul in either case.

And there are those who argue that the United States should not be in Haiti at all. They have a case. In part it rests on the president's failure to go to Congress as invasion plans took shape. A negotiated presence may be a welcome *ex post facto* excuse for this lapse, but it should not hide the constitutional breach that has occurred. But the case of the anti-interventionists has other consequences as well. Were they ready to face the repercussions of a hands-off policy? Lift the international embargo. End support for the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Acknowledge that protesting the torture, the rapes, the murders, the assassinations, and the human rights violations would be nothing other than empty protests. Finally, live with the verdict that Haitians are irredeemably indentured to their class-bound economic and political system, under which the vast majority live in virtual slavery.

Certainly the most compelling justification for an invasion was to bring a halt to the mayhem perpetrated by Haiti's military. "An army of occupation" is how one Haitian described it to Larry Rohter of the *New York Times* (September 25, 1994). This assessment was obviously shared by the thousands of Haitians who turned out to welcome the "invading" forces, and who, at least for the moment, feel some semblance of security under the eyes and guns of U.S. soldiers.

Now that United States forces are there, expectations should be modest and clearly focused. The United States and its international allies cannot establish democracy in a country that has never had it, but their presence at least allows democratic processes to move forward. Aristide can be restored to office, along with legitimately

elected members of the Parliament, many of whom are in hiding or exile. Aristide was a cautious economic leader when first in office and his return should bring aid, loans, and investments of the kind that will build infrastructure and allow a more equitable distribution of the island's resources. One development expert put the matter succinctly: "People here are not asking for anything extraordinary, only the things that you [Americans] have enjoyed since 1789, simple things: jobs, schools, lights, health care, water. For a peasant, a glass of clean water is a big thing."

The Haitian constitution provides for parliamentary elections at the end of this year and a presidential election early in 1996. Aristide cannot succeed himself and, in any case, has promised to turn power over to a duly elected successor. This gives him and the prodemocratic forces in Haiti approximately eighteen months to lay the foundation for democracy in Haiti. He must begin to make economic improvements sufficient to give hope to the poor and to solidify support for democratic institutions, while keeping the wealth of upper-class Haitians in the country. He must convince his followers that revenge will undermine democracy, while building a judicial system that insures that justice will be done. And despite the agreement with Mr. Carter, General Cedras and his fellow thugs should be inexorably pressed to leave the country.

Eighteen months is a very short time for Haiti and a very long time for Americans. Calls to bring home U.S. soldiers should be tempered by the real possibility that this time we might get it right and that this time the Haitians might achieve the democratic society for which they have long hungered. Their hopes and longings deserve our support.

ET CETERA

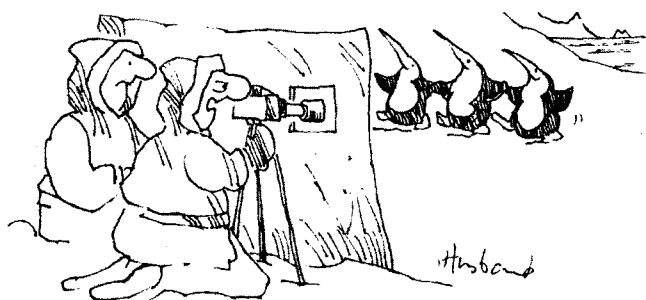
IN THE MAIL BAG

Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick
National Coordinator
Women's Ordination Conference

Dear Mrs. Fitzpatrick:

My wife, Mary Sullivan, and I would like you to strike our names from your membership rolls and return those small sums we have sent you over the past couple of years.

When I rejoined the Women's Ordination Conference a



"Damn. They've seen us."

while back, I called your office first to make sure that the ordination of women was the only issue on which WOC would be heard. I was most eager to make sure that WOC would not embroil itself in the abortion controversy. I was assured you would not, and so I, along with my spouse, signed up.

Imagine, therefore, our reaction when we opened the *New York Times* [September 2, 1994] and found WOC's heretofore good name appearing below your signature in an open letter to Bill Clinton addressing the Cairo conference and undercutting the Vatican's complaints about that conference!

We searched the bottom of the ad for one of those organization-cited-for-purpose-of-identification-only disclaimers. But all we found was explicit indication that Catholics for a Free Choice, a group dedicated to keeping America's abortion laws the most permissive in the West, had been the prime mover behind the letter.

Certainly, WOC is free to do and say what it pleases—but not with the membership or support of our family. You broke your end of the bargain; return those dues we have paid and contributions we have made....

Sincerely,
Kevin M. Doyle
Birmingham, Alabama

NOTEBOOK

EPISTEMOLOGICAL MUDDLES

RELIGION & THE MEDIA

Commonweal held its second "War of the Worldviews?" forum on the "neuralgic" relationship between the media and religion at Georgetown University, Tuesday, September 13. The first skirmish was conducted in June at Loyola University in Chicago. Both conferences have been well attended, and the discussion has been unreasonably civil and nuanced in the best *Commonweal* tradition. Journalists on both panels have candidly acknowledged that bias exists in the newsroom and even criticized the sometimes unexamined views of their more smugly secular colleagues. Chicago keynote speaker Peter Steinfeld's assessment that ignorance and lack of resources are probably bigger problems than outright antireligious or anti-Catholic prejudice was seconded by almost all.

As a former newspaper reporter, I also feel strongly that the complaints about religion coverage are virtually identical to the gripes of every other group. Everyone is convinced they get a raw deal from the press—and everyone, in a sense, is right about that. (An intuition I will pursue below.) Cokie Roberts of ABC News made this point vividly at the Washington forum. She suggested that religion was far from the most maligned victim of the press. "I could make a good case that the coverage of religion is considerably better than the coverage of Congress," she said.

True enough. Still, I think the deeper dissatisfaction with and even outright distrust of the media have yet to be fully fleshed out. Perhaps this will happen at the final forum in New York at Fordham University Law School October 25, although it can be an elusive subject. Certainly, the public is increasingly uneasy about the influence of the media in public life and politics. I suspect a portion of that unease has to do with the sense that the media seem incapable of either making sense of or communicating what it is that draws people to religion in the first place, what keeps many of the agnostic hovering around religious institutions, or what drives many others to create ersatz religions of their own. Yes, faith or a belief in God is not a strictly falsifiable claim. As such, it is not "information" the media handle well. The "just the facts, ma'am," assumptions—and those are big assumptions—of news stories tend to reduce religious and moral claims to private and often idiosyncratic hobbies somewhat akin to a belief in UFOs or astrology. Consequently, religious "knowledge" that many Americans know to be reliable has less and less resonance in public conversation conducted through the media.

What I'm trying to get at was touched on by Terry Eastland, the editor of *Forbes Media Critic*, in his remarks in Washington. Eastland noted that an "epistemological" problem or divide was evident in the conflict between religion and the media. Traditional religion, he said, remains a premodern phenomenon. The press, he argued, is a cousin of the modern social sciences, and proceeds from skeptical and positivist assumptions that are inhospitable to the "supernatural" preoccupations of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. More provocatively, Eastland suggested that the media both create and seek to satisfy an insatiable modern appetite for novelty that is fundamentally at odds with a traditional religious perspective. Our obsession with the news, he suggested, purposefully distracts us from the truth—and most pointedly from the truth of the Good News.

I put the argument starkly (and terms like premodern and supernatural can be very slippery), but I hope I haven't distorted Eastland's basic point. I think he's on the right track, but I would broaden the emphasis. The "news" distracts us not just from the truth but from a more satisfactory democratic politics as well. We are awash in information, overwhelmed by it, and frequently defeated by it. Our appetite for news is disorienting and enervating, and much of the blame lies with the media whose pursuit of so-called "objectivity" implicitly relegates argument and debate to the ghetto of mere "opinion." (CNN's "Crossfire" is a good example of what passes for "debate"!)

As a result, the vaunted "information age" seems to be producing a public conversation that is incoherent, bland, and petty.

Without perspective, context, and argument, facts are useless. As the late Christopher Lasch writes in his forthcoming book (*The Revolt of the Elites*, Norton), advances in communications technology have not produced a better informed or more fully engaged public, but a more alienated and cynical one. "What democracy requires is vigorous debate, not information," Lasch writes. "We can know our own minds only by explaining them to others." Quoting James Carey (*Communication as Culture*, 1988), Lasch argues that historically

the press's embrace of objectivity and the cult of information resulted in its "abandon[ing] its role as an agency for carrying on the conversation of our culture." Here Lasch makes an epistemological point similar to Eastland's. Lasch argues that only democratic dialogue—not just the contending agendas of "experts"—can provide the kind of knowledge that will enable us to make use of the vast store of information at our disposal. "Systematic inquiry," Lasch writes, quoting John Dewey, "[is] only the beginning of knowledge, not its final form. The knowledge needed by any community—whether it was a community of scientific inquirers or a political community—emerged only from 'dialogue' and 'direct give and take.'"

Of course objective reporting and a fair-minded regard for the facts are always needed. But a greater recognition of the limits of mere information and a renewed appreciation of the kind of knowledge that community life and broad democratic participation make available might be the way in which religious "knowledge" is brought back into the conversation of our culture as something more than a second-class epistemology. In any event, it seems increasingly clear that democracy's health, if not its survival, requires the kind of knowledge religion has historically provided. And that's a story the media should be covering.

PAUL BAUMANN

THE VIEW FROM MT. ANGEL

EXPERIENCING THE TRADITION GOD IS IN THE DOUGHNUT CRUMBS

As it happens I'm teaching for a year at the diocesan seminary run by the Benedictine monks in Mt. Angel, Oregon. My wife wanted her master's in theology and I arranged to teach literature in the seminary's college program. We send the kids off to the bus-stop every morning, pack up the van, and go, driving north into rolling farmland. An hour later we see the abbey in the distance, red-tiled roofs on a forested hill.

I was euphoric my first few weeks there, delighted with the warmth of the people and the scale of the place. I've moved now into the stage when details come into focus. Abstractions are taking on their particulars: the stale smell of cigarettes in the halls, the sound of rap music on some distant stereo, doughnut crumbs in the coffee room. Mt. Angel is becoming a real place, the monks and seminarians real people, with their own particular names and voices. Students yawn here, too, and slouch at their desks. There's the same tension and tightening a month into the term, the same resistances and the same need to convince.

What struck me at a recent faculty meeting was how familiar things seemed, despite the monks' long, flowing habits and

the opening prayer. People were nicer than I'm used to, trying harder to listen and cooperate. But there was still the wrangling about procedure and the bumbling around about dates and times, the talking at cross-purposes, the reinventing of wheels. What seems solid from a distance never is up close. Even in the church the premises are contested. There are camps and conflicts and the slow, restraining pressures of inertia. There are the glances across the conference table, the lifting of eyebrows.

I've found all this deeply reassuring—a corrective to the kind of easy stereotyping the press and others fall into whenever a pope comes to visit or Catholicism needs to be talked about. It's not just that the focus always seems to be on sexual issues to the exclusion of anything else or that many people and even many Catholics still talk about the church as if Vatican II never happened. The problem in these discussions is that the church is always presumed to be some vast, monolithic, impersonal institution, a system of dogma-enforcement so old and so powerful that it can't be felt as human. The image seems to be of long, hushed corridors and echoing chambers—the church as nothing but tradition in the abstract, nothing but ideas: the Immaculate Conception, celibacy, patriarchy.

But what I'm experiencing every day at the abbey is not “the priesthood” or “the crisis of the priesthood” or “the male-only, celibate-only priesthood.” I'm experiencing José and Mark and Maselino: their individual stories, the sound of their laughter in the halls. As we work together on Wordsworth or the *Iliad*, I'm not thinking about these people as future priests but as students trying with varying degrees of sensitivity and intelligence to understand the language of literature, no different in many ways from any other group of students I've taught, no less capable of insight or misreading. There are some differences, good ones for me as a teacher of literature: a greater respect for authority, a greater willingness to work hard, a greater openness to imagination and feeling. Yet in its daily give-and-take the teaching seems just as haphazard and messy as it always does. I feel right at home.

Each day at noon prayer, my wife and I watch the monks trail in from wherever they've been, bowing to the altar and taking their places in the choir. Each day we join them in the chanting of the Psalms. What we're experiencing is not the “Benedictine tradition” exactly. We're standing at that place, at that time, with that noon light streaming through the windows, that monk on the back left coming in on the wrong measure. And we know that monk now, his name, his quick smile. When we look at the choir we don't see “monastic life.” We see Dominic, Konrad, Joachim.

What we join every noon is grounded in centuries-old tradition and a spirituality worked out in every detail, dignified, structured, beautiful. And yet there also seems to me something wonderfully amateurish and ad hoc about the whole thing—something specific and local, as if a bunch of guys have just gotten together and agreed to go through these odd motions for a while. Voices crack, shoulders shrug, someone hurries in late. It seems almost made-up, spontaneous.

I'm sitting in on a class myself in “Fundamental Theology.” What we're learning, among other things, is the grand struc-

ture of the church as it's laid out in *Dei verbum*, the Vatican II document on revelation. It seems to me quintessentially Catholic in some ways, a powerful summary of the church's belief in apostolic succession and the teaching authority of the magisterium. Somehow, I know, this structure is underneath what draws me to the abbey in the first place: the silence and the peacefulness, the holiness at the center, the reverence.

Yet at the same time I wonder if the church ever really exists on the level of council documents, whether there really is a “church” in this sense or whether there's just a whole series of moments and glimpses and individual acts carried on day-to-day, informed by tradition, informed by theology. I wonder how the church would change if we started seeing it this way. It would certainly be a lot harder to dismiss or evade responsibility for. It would be too vulnerable. It would be too complicated.

I bet the disciples had sore feet and growling stomachs sometimes, and it's clear from the Gospels that they were often making things up as they went, making mistakes and doing the best they could. The Gospels are stories, after all, good stories, full of the complexities of character and the concreteness of scene. There are all these distracting place names: Capernaum, Caesarea Philippi, Bethsaida, Tyre. What Catholics most centrally believe is that God intervened in history, came, that is, to a certain place and a certain time. We miss the point altogether if we don't imagine the dusty roads and the smelly donkeys and the hawking of the sellers in the marketplace. I think we're too quick to generalize, to read past the contingent to the transcendent, when the contingent matters just as much if not finally more. What's astonishing about the stories the magisterium is meant to preserve and interpret is their claim that God came into a haphazard and bumbling and continually reinvented world exactly like our own—in fact, that God has come into this world, right now, the world of the rolling fields and the doughnut crumbs and the slow, sweet chanting of the prayers at noon.

CHRIS ANDERSON

Chris Anderson is associate professor of English at Oregon State University and the author of, most recently, Edge Effects: Notes from an Oregon Forest (University of Iowa Press).

REPORT ON AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

'A MOBILIZATION OF SHAME' SPEAKING AGAINST THE UNSPEAKABLE

first became closely acquainted with Amnesty International in November 1976, when I was on an Amnesty delegation to Argentina, a nation which in March 1976 had been taken over by a military coup. Accompanied by Sir Eric Avebury, a member of the British House of Lords, and a staff member from the London office of Amnesty, I helped to conduct inquiries for several days, wrote the report,

gave the government thirty days to reply to it, and then released it.

The process was scrupulously fair, comprehensive, and impartial. Although Amnesty International had not yet won the Nobel Peace Prize, the military and government-controlled press in Buenos Aires knew the worldwide power of Amnesty. The visiting human rights delegation was excoriated in the press and Amnesty was scorned as a Communist front. My rejoinder that Amnesty had just recently published a definitive study of the horrors of the Soviet Gulag never made the press in Argentina.

Since 1976 my admiration for Amnesty has increased in every way. The recent publication of Amnesty's thirty-second annual report confirms and deepens my appreciation and gratitude for this organization established by an English Catholic attorney in 1961 after he became angry when he read of the brutal repression carried out on citizens in Portugal. This man, Peter Benenson, deliberately chose Trinity Sunday in 1961 to launch Amnesty. It was an appropriate year, Mr. Benenson noted, because it commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the emancipation of the slaves in America and the liberation of the serfs in Russia.

Amnesty now has 1.1 million members in over 150 countries. There are 4,349 local units plus several thousand university and other groups in eighty nations. On October 1, 1993, Amnesty was working on 3,507 "action files" involving 8,906 persons and had so far that year initiated 551 urgent appeals to its networks across the globe. These new actions were issued on behalf of people who had been victims of torture, political killings, disappearances, or similar serious violations of human rights.

I personally witnessed the impact of an "urgent action message" from Amnesty. In the 1980s I was on a human rights mission in Chile—immediately before Pinochet was removed from office by a democratic election. The government in Santiago had just imprisoned and sentenced to interior exile a prominent physician because he had stated openly that the government was engaged in torturing political dissidents. Within a day Amnesty had alerted over fifty nations to launch a protest. The ambassadors of these nations in Chile brought intense pressure on the Pinochet government to release this political prisoner. Within seventy-two hours the outspoken doctor was back with his family.

A recent visit to Amnesty's London headquarters reminded me of the vast, worldwide network of resources which the organization possesses. I was not prepared for the intense security around Amnesty's building in London, but clearly tyrants everywhere in the world would like to destroy the files kept there.

The 1994 report reveals the details of Amnesty's somber mission. In 112 nations prisoners were tortured or abused. Political assassinations occurred in sixty-one countries. The extent of the human rights violations in countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe is appalling. The report also discloses the persistent, pervasive, and penetrating messages Amnesty sent to the world press. The 352-page annual report also describes at some

length the intense collaboration which Amnesty International maintains with human rights groups, both public and private, across the globe.

I saw that collaboration at its finest in 1993 during the eight days of the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. I was there as a representative of the American Bar Association and witnessed the magnificent leadership which Amnesty gave to other nongovernmental organizations and to the entire conference. Amnesty was looked to by everyone as a principal architect of that remarkable gathering, which brought together delegates from 154 nations and from two thousand nongovernmental organizations.

Amnesty's crusade for human rights concentrates on political rather than economic rights. Central to its agenda is an opposition to capital punishment. In annual report after annual report the entry about the United States repeats Amnesty's condemnation of the practice, and notes that the death penalty has been abolished everywhere in Europe and in almost every nation in Latin America.

Amnesty is also the world's clearinghouse for information about the progress of the ratification of the United Nations covenant on human rights. Again the United States lags behind almost every other nation. In June 1994, the United States finally ratified the international covenant on political and international rights, but has yet to ratify major UN covenants on the rights of women and children. Indeed, the United States has not even ratified the American Convention on Human Rights, thus depriving the United States of a voice and vote in the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights based in Costa Rica.

The massive outpouring of literature from Amnesty is filled with facts, names, and tragic stories. There is no concentration on theory or philosophy. Amnesty, in its own words, wants to orchestrate a "mobilization of shame." And it has succeeded far better than could conceivably have been imagined by its founder in 1961.

When I speak at the first meeting of the Amnesty chapter at Georgetown University Law Center each fall, I usually remind the students that Amnesty has helped to liberate 25,000 political prisoners. I also recall the stirring statement made by Amnesty on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary—a statement which epitomizes the very essence of its mission:

When you do something to help a prisoner of conscience or to try to save someone from torture, you are doing something of incalculable value—even if it may seem very modest to you. You are taking a stand for human dignity. You are saying that you refuse to accept the torture, the humiliation, and the silencing of another human being. In the face of cruelty and the arrogant abuse of limitless power, you are proving—by personal example—to both the victims and their tormentors that compassion, justice, and human love are still alive.

ROBERT F. DRINAN

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PARADIGMS IN PERIL

AS ALWAYS

Are we undergoing a foundational change in the world and the life of the church? Bishop Kenneth Untener, an especially acute theological observer, thinks so. He describes the cultural changes that resulted in the event of Vatican II as a fundamental movement in which "the great plates beneath the church have shifted." He claims that while something massive is going on, we're all still trying to figure out what it is.

Aha, thought I, this not only sounds right but I think I have a few clues as to what's been happening to us. My own insights spring from a long career marked by far too much intellectual infighting. Liberal-leaning Catholic writers, in case you didn't know, receive regular doses of "hate mail," or "fraternal correction," filled with messages such as, "Don't you see, Sidney, that you're really a bad Catholic?" or "Shame, shame on you for betraying the faith." Slam, bang, wham!

As I recoil from these assaults, I'm often struck by the fact that the particular disagreement over an issue (women's ordination, contraception, homosexuality, just war, or whatever) is secondary to far deeper and more fundamental differences. Unfortunately, opponents in today's church can appear to inhabit different mental and psychological worlds.

Catholics coping with tectonic cultural shifts become mired in large metaphysical meta-debates or paradigm-clashes. Surface conflicts reveal deeper underlying rifts over how we should arrive at our convictions about what is really "real," or God's own truth.

Take the growing acceptance by thinkers and theologians of the view that dynamic processes and constant change are present in every domain of life, including the Christian faith. In process thinking all the old familiar posed photographs in the

treasured album come to life and turn into moving pictures. Things don't stay put anymore, and never did.

Along with the discovery of constant change and evolutionary development there's a new realization that all entities exist within dynamic systems and interconnected ecological networks. No man (or religious faith) is an island. Even distinct categories and definitions possess "fuzzy" boundaries. Context alters content. Things don't come in tidy packages, and never did.

Then there's the even more troubling realization that human beings are always limited by their particular historical context. People can only subjectively construct and interpret perceived reality within their particular bounded horizons, always operating with partial perspectives. Things are now and always have been interpreted, with plenty of revisions reworking the absolute certainties of yesteryear.

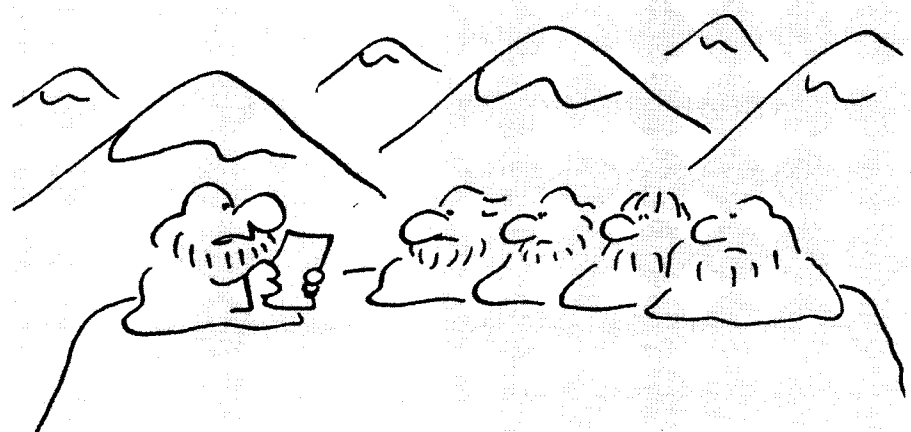
Once you get the message that reality is constituted by dynamic changing systemic forces, within ecological webs of life, limited by subjective interpretations, one's naive confidence in the "real" world and timeless faith tends to wobble. Panic, anxiety, vertigo, and intellectual seasickness

may threaten one's deepest convictions. In reaction, some believers vigorously reject any "turn to the subject," and resolutely retreat from the relativistic dangers of "process thinking." They re-dedicate themselves fervently to universal objective truths: eternally unchanging, distinctly clear, and absolutely certain.

If other people don't accept these truths, too bad for them. Either the recalcitrant ones cannot reason properly or they refuse in their pride to submit to the authority of those commissioned by God to pass on divinely revealed truths. Fundamentalism comes in many guises but we know it when we see it.

A refined fundamentalist critique of process thinking forecasts the inevitability of its decline into moral relativism, if not nihilism. Once you grant the reality of constant change, the influence of context, and subjective interpretation, won't you end up a complete skeptic about accepting any truths? Why isn't my subjective perception of truth as good as yours? Finally in full-blown epidemics of moral skepticism persons will find themselves too trapped within an imperial protean self to make any moral commitments, or to be faithful to anything. Goodbye Truth, farewell to the sovereignty of the Good. One more culture goes down the drain.

Well, O.K., who isn't afraid of creeping moral decadence? I for one don't want to end up in Therapy Land where "being comfortable" with your choice is more important than making a valid or good decision. As a psychologist I'm supersensitive to the accusations (too often justified) of



*"Special bulletin from the head office in Lhasa, boys,
there's been a change in the meaning of life."*

the prevalence of psychobabble and the triumph of the therapeutic.

However, I deny the charge that the turn to the subject and a recognition of process, systems, context, and interpretation must *inevitably* lead to moral relativism and a denial of objective reality. Academic and rigorous psychological inquiries into subjective processes of development do not end up endorsing subjective relativism. Yes, science, including the human sciences, do require methods of skeptical doubt, but this critical testing is employed in order to seek general consensus and increasingly objective, valid, and lawful understandings (a justification by doubt?).

Few will deny that high probabilities and virtual certainties can be reasonably achieved in science. I would also claim that critical moral reasoning can achieve highly probable objective results worthy of assent. My confidence in a critical moral realism arises partly from my understanding of common, universal patterns that characterize the reasoning of human subjects. In the midst of dynamic flow, new visions of systemic order and consensus emerge.

Clearly there exist innate species-specific subjective human capabilities that appear always and everywhere. Children in every culture effortlessly learn complex rule-based languages at an astounding rate; there must be an innate rational "universal grammar" capacity in the human brain ready to go. Nurture determines which language(s) will be learned, but cognitive constants and common developmental patterns point to innate, highly active reasoning powers programmed to operate within the child.

Common crosscultural emotional patterns of expression and development also appear. The human species is social, and forms positive psychosocial bonds of loving attachment. Kinship and cultural meanings are created universally. While selfishness and evil also appear everywhere, the pessimists and the cultural relativists appear to be quite wrong about either the malleability or amorality of humankind. We undoubtedly have an innate, programmed universal core of moral grammar that is usually exceedingly effective in producing the growth of individual conscience.

Ironically, when employing a psychological developmental perspective, subjectivity always leads to objectivity. I must have a consciousness of myself to understand your claims as another. And if I know that I am interpreting something in a particular limited context, then I'm able to see that others must be influenced by their own contexts and viewpoints. Perhaps we can have a common dialogue and progress toward consensus—or all be mistaken together. Humility comes with a self-consciousness of the developmental processes involved in discovery. The more you discover the more you see there is more to know. (Socrates knows nothing, and Saint Thomas considers his achievements as straw.)

Each normal child is programmed to fig-

ure out reality and miraculously learn to speak, think, and morally reason in increasingly rational, expressive, and subtle ways. And remember, any spoken sentence could be extended into infinity by continually adding more clauses and complex constructions. Obviously, among other things, we're a species prepared for the eternal conversation.

So why shouldn't the inquiry and constantly revising search for new and better interpretations and understanding of God and reality be welcomed? Automatic progress is not assured, but neither must regression be our human fate. A pilgrim's progress through painful approximations toward God and reality is worth living and dying for. Shifting continents or no, in seeking you will find. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

A DIFFERENT KIND OF KNOWING FOR THOSE WITH EARS TO HEAR



ne of the most frightening images in the modern world is that of the not uncommon sort of concentration camp guard who could move from the murderous world of the camp—who could witness, even take active part in, the humiliation and murder of other human beings—to his home, where he could put his children to bed with great tenderness, and listen to Mozart, weeping at the beauty of the experience.

The connection between perception, sensing, sensibility—the realm of the aesthetic—and the kind of knowledge we can articulate and act upon is not at all clear. But it is essential that we try to understand the connection as deeply as we can. One of the great myths of the Enlightenment is that education, an acquaintance with art and literature and the great thought of the past, can make us better people and more competent, even more moral, members of society. World War II should have ended the power of that myth, but it lives on despite all the evidence.

It is easy to see why it is so seductive, and especially seductive to people who have experienced the great power of art to bring us into the presence of beauty, sometimes so forcefully that it literally takes your breath away. The first time I read Rilke's first *Duino Elegy* or came to the last paragraph in Joyce's *The Dead*, and felt deep stillness and astonishment, I knew that in some way I was changed, that if I didn't betray that moment things would not be the same from now on.

This experience is, to be sure, as fuzzy at one end as it is intense at the other. How would things not be the same? What would it mean, not to betray that stillness—only that I should remember it? That might be enough; but simply to have been brought to the edge of mystery seems to be enough, at the aesthetic level, and not nearly enough, at the level of action.

The purpose of art is not to make us better people, nor is art a form of moral exhortation. It is in fact possible for great art to participate in great evil, for art to be aesthetically impressive and degrade at the

same time. (There is a genuine sadism that informs Picasso's *Weeping Women*, shown recently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.) I am not referring here to the terrible influence a brilliantly written but perverse novel might have on someone's behavior. What I am interested in is the ability of the Nazi to listen to Bach or to read Rilke, and continue to be a Nazi, with no apparent internal contradiction. I cannot say he is not moved to the same stillness I am. But what do we think we have found there, either of us?

This is related to another problem: the behavior of the artists and writers who can move us this way. Dostoevsky was at once capable of writing *The Brothers Karamazov* and of behaving quite boorishly; Tolstoy was often as full of delusion and self-pity as he was capable of brilliant insight. Walker Percy once said that the only two writers he could think of who were also decent people were Chekhov and Eudora Welty.

We could say that this is simply a matter of our living in a fallen world, that in all cases Paul's statement remains true: "The good I would do, I do not do." But it is one thing to say that we can fail in our attempts to live decently, to be good; it is another to live with what seems to be a radical disconnection between the realm of the beautiful and any truth worth living for. Is there no insight in Bach, or Rilke; or, if there is, does it have anything to do with the truths we must live by?

We need a larger frame, I think. We are still working with some notions that come down to us from the Enlightenment and from the Romantic movement. From the Enlightenment we get the idea that to understand something rationally is to understand it sufficiently. (This is the mentality that says that theology could be taught as well by an atheist as a believer, to the extent that theology is a consistent intellectual endeavor.) The Romantics, who reacted to the smug certainties of the Enlightenment, have given us the idea that to understand something completely we must understand it emotionally, from within. We have somehow wedded these contradictory ideas in our understanding of moral education. We can't understand the Nazi who weeps at Mozart in the evening and turns on the gas in the morn-

ing, because we have been taught to believe that schooling, a deliberate exposure to culture, makes us better people.

The place in which the aesthetic and religious are most clearly wedded may be the icon. Many icons are extraordinarily beautiful. Rublev's *Trinity* is an example of the sort of work of art before which you are brought to stillness. But in an important sense, this isn't the point. Some great Orthodox saints prayed before icons which were dreadful, from an artistic and canonical point of view; and some horrible Orthodox live surrounded by lovely icons.

An experience cannot, in and of itself, educate us or form us; this is Romantic fallacy. Nor can the application of reason or a set of standards educate us. (This could be called the rationalistic—or canonical—fallacy.) Both must be understood within a greater context.

A person who is formed by prayer, by liturgy, by ascetic struggle, will respond to the world differently from someone who is constantly distracted, who never worships, who responds to every desire by yielding to it. And most of us probably live somewhere in between those two poles.

The question is not only one of responding to the world differently, but has to do also with our capacity for seeing the world. We bring the formed self—formed either by prayer or by distraction—to how we reason, to how we envision the world. An experience of overwhelming beauty might bring even the most evil person to a kind of stillness, but if the larg-

er context is lacking, if no serious demand has ever been made on that person, it will remain merely an overwhelming aesthetic experience. We have allowed the Enlightenment and the Romantic strains in our culture to limit us: things are understood rationally, or emotionally. We must consider the possibility that one can also understand the world spiritually, that this dimension is not a variant of the subjective realm of the emotions or the objective realm of reason, but has its own objectivity and subjectivity.

The objectivity is what Orthodox spirituality means when it speaks of *apatheia*. Kallistos Ware points out that "the 'dispassioned' person, so far from being apathetic, is the one whose heart burns with love for God, for other humans, for every living creature, for all that God has made (*The Orthodox Way*, Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981). He quotes Saint Isaac the Syrian: "The heart of such a man grows tender, and he cannot endure to hear of or look upon any injury, even the smallest suffering, inflicted upon anything in creation. Therefore he never ceases to pray with tears even for the dumb animals, for the enemies of truth, and for all who do harm to it, asking that they may be guarded and receive God's mercy. And for the reptiles also he prays with great compassion, which rises up endlessly in his heart after the example of God."

The beauty which brings us to stillness, in Bach or in Rublev's *Trinity*, can be understood only if someone has brought this wider living, this truer understanding, to his or her seeing. The idea of right understanding, truer observation, seems elitist in a time which doesn't feel comfortable with hierarchies of any sort, or the idea that there may be a privileged understanding, a kind of knowing more real than another. It is this more real knowing, a knowing different from and more important than reason or emotion, that Jesus pointed to when he said, "He who has ears, let him hear." Without this hierarchy (which Meister Eckhart, among others, certainly knew—he spoke of the "spiritual aristocrat") we are left with the concentration camp guard and the great theologian Karl Barth, both moved to the depths by Mozart, and both equals in the only kinds of understanding our age allows. □



"I'm not sure about his morals but he's very good at his job."

THE WITHERING OF THE WORKING CLASS

AND WHO'S LETTING IT HAPPEN

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

What follows is an unpleasant analysis that has no happy ending. I hate to write so pessimistic a piece, but what can I do? The Alcoholics Anonymous people say you have to admit you're a drunk before you can hope for sobriety. The born-again Christians say you have to admit you're a sinner before you can hope for salvation. Honesty about one's problems is always the first step. The following is intended as an exercise in social honesty. Although I have little or no idea what moves ought to follow, I trust that a recognition of our problems is always a good first step.

One of the advantages of the collapse of communism is that it will free us from the century-long myth that Karl Marx was a social theorist of the first rank. No question he was an important theorist, as would anyone be who was the official philosopher of the political movement that dominated most of the twentieth century. Important is one thing, top-notch something else.

But the post-cold war reaction against Marxian concepts can be carried too far. Consider the idea of class conflict. No doubt Marx carried this idea to unreasonable extremes, teaching that class interests are everything, the common good nothing, and that there is no moral limit to the means that may be used in order to make one's own class prevail in these mortal struggles. With very good reason we might not want to accept Marx's exaggerated claim, but it does not follow that class struggle is nonexistent or unimportant. In American society today, for instance, there are still a number of socioeconomic strata which, for want of a better term, may be called social classes; the interests of one class will often conflict with those of other classes; classes will tend to pursue their own interests; and generally speaking, those classes that have more or better resources—money, organization, education, numbers, control of the agencies of propaganda, etc.—will come out on top in these struggles. In sum, class conflict is alive and well in the United States, even though it is

not about to plunge the nation into either civil war or revolution.

Yet to listen to contemporary political discourse, you would think we live in a classless society or something very close to it. There is a great deal of talk about conflict based on gender, race, and even sexual orientation, but hardly any talk at all about conflict based on social class. There is, I grant, a certain amount of talk about "the middle class" (as in the famous expression, "middle-class tax cut"), but since the great majority of Americans, with the exception of the very poor at the bottom and a handful of very rich at the top, consider themselves to be middle class, this hardly qualifies as genuine class analysis. When the middle class includes millionaires at one end and low-paid, non-union, blue-collar workers at the other, the term has lost all real meaning.

Perhaps someone will say, "There is certainly class conflict in the United States, but it is overshadowed at the moment by far more serious conflicts between men and women, whites and blacks, straights and gays." But this is nonsense—nonsense on



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stilts, to borrow Jeremy Bentham's classic expression. Anyone who imagines that the male/female clash of interests is more serious than the rich/poor clash is out of touch with the real world. The white/black conflict has at least the *prima facie* appearance of being serious; but on closer inspection it turns out that much of what seems to be racial conflict is really class conflict, masked by the fact that a disproportionate percentage of African-Americans are found in the poorest classes.

When collisions of interest that are less pressing get all the attention while those plainly more critical get virtually none, one of two things must be going on. Either everyone has become very stupid, or someone is trying to distract our attention. The stupidity hypothesis is tempting; but we Americans, while perhaps a little more stupid than we used to be, are not quite that dumb. So the question becomes: "Who is trying to distract our attention?"

The first step toward answering that question is to rephrase it: "Is there any class (or classes) whose interests would be served by distracting attention from the reality of class conflict?" The answer: "Yes, of course, the privileged classes, the classes who are doing very well under the status quo."

It is never in the interests of the privileged classes to analyze society in terms of class interests, at least not publicly. They may engage in such analysis privately, of course—at the office, over dinner tables, in country club locker rooms. But if they were to do this publicly, it would only call attention to their privileges, to what would seem to many (though not to themselves) to be the unfairness of the prevailing distribution of wealth, power, and prestige. So it is best to remain silent about these things. But silence all by itself is never enough, for it leaves a vacuum that someone else might fill. Thus it is important to sponsor alternative, nonclass definitions and analyses of society and its problems. There are various ways of doing this. One way is to stress class cooperation, for example, how the higher classes help the lower classes to improve their situation. Another is to stress values that all classes hold in common, such as religion, nationalism, and sports. Still another way is, while acknowledging that society experiences a great deal of conflict, to focus attention on nonclass forms of conflict—race, gender, and sexual orientation.

It is in the interest of the relatively underprivileged classes to sponsor analysis of society in terms of classes, class interests, and class conflict; for such analysis legitimates the desire of the underdogs to alter the status quo in their favor, to rectify what they perceive to be social injustices. Thus in early nineteenth-century England the new class of manufacturing capitalists embraced a class analysis of society that undermined the privileges of the old upper class of landowning nobility and gentry. And no sooner was this accomplished than the equally new urban industrial working class embraced a form of class analysis (the Marxian critique of society being the prime example) that undermined the privileges of their masters, the newly triumphant capitalist class. Of course, not all underdog classes are able to generate or support an intellectually serious class-based critique of their society. Classes of slaves and serfs, for instance, though capable at times of intense class hatred, rarely

or never produce such a critique. To do this the class has to have a certain minimum amount of strength, in terms of numbers, solidarity, education, and confidence. In other words, it has to be both privileged and underprivileged at the same time.

Once upon a time in the United States, indeed as recently as the early sixties, there was a social class with the right mixture of privilege and underprivilege. It sponsored a class analysis of society, albeit an analysis that was relatively mild in tone: not as radical as the Marxist analysis, not even as radical as the analysis typical of socialist parties and labor unions in Western Europe. This class was the American working class.

The disappearance of social class analysis from popular political discourse during the last generation, and its corresponding replacement by analysis based on gender, race, and sexual orientation, is the consequence of a twofold process: the drastic decline in the working class, and the unchallenged pre-eminence of an expanded higher class.

For purposes of the present discussion, let us view the United States as divided into three major social classes: a higher class (C-1), a working class (C-2), and a lower class (C-3). I am not saying that my three-part division is the only one, the right one, or even the best one. Each of these could be further subdivided; but such subdivisions would be irrelevant to my present purpose, which is to give an account of the waning of the American working class. This account requires us to take note of the fact that there are some people more privileged than the working class and others less privileged.

By the higher, or C-1, class I mean those people for whose benefit society as a whole is organized, so that they might lead interesting and comfortable lives. For the most part these people are college graduates; they (or their spouses) work at professional or quasi-professional jobs; they own their own homes; they live in safe neighborhoods of at least suburban quality; their children go to private schools or good public schools; almost all of their children graduate from college.

By the working, or C-2, class I mean those people whose work, though socially necessary, is too boring or demeaning (not to mention low-paying) to be done by members of the higher class. C-2 people lead lives that are neither especially interesting nor especially comfortable. They are usually high school graduates, at times community college graduates. Sometimes they own their own homes in cities or older, run-down suburbs; often they are renters for many years, not uncommonly for a whole lifetime. Their children attend public schools, often of mediocre quality. A college education for their children is far from a sure thing.

By the lower, or C-3, class I mean those people who are largely unnecessary to the functioning of society. Without much exaggeration, they might be called society's superfluous people, corresponding to Marx's *lumpenproletariat*. They suffer from chronic unemployment and underemployment; they often rely on long-term welfare support. They almost never own their own homes. Their neighborhoods have high rates of crime, poverty, substance abuse, violence, school dropouts, and out-of-wedlock births. Their children commonly attend the very worst public

schools, and very few of them graduate from college.

In the last thirty years in the United States there has been an expansion of the upper and lower classes—the fortunate and the miserable classes—combined with a corresponding shrinkage of the working class. The question of why these changes took place, though a tremendously interesting and important question, is not something there is room to go into here. Suffice it to note that they have taken place, and as a result the class composition of American society is strikingly different today from what it was in the forties and fifties.

Any social class, including the working class, has three principal sets of interest: economic interests, political interests, and cultural interests. Until the early sixties the American working class had three great institutions, each then at the height of its power, devoted to the three sets of C-2 interests. The labor movement was devoted to C-2 economic interests, the Democratic party to its political interests, and the Catholic church to its cultural interests.

In the intervening years a twofold development has taken place in all three of these institutions. For one thing, they have all declined in influence. For another, where once upon a time they were almost exclusively concerned with the interests of the working class, now they divide their concern between the working class and the upper class, with the interests of the latter tending to get preferential attention. A picture of the decline and fall of the working class since the mid-sixties can be given in the form of a number of brief accounts of this twofold transformation in the labor movement, the Democratic party, and the Catholic church.

• **Labor Unions.** As recently as the late 1950s, more than one-third of all American non-farm workers belonged to labor unions. That figure slowly tapered off in the late 1960s, and by the late '60s the percentage had dropped below 30 percent. By the late '70s it was down to about 25 percent, and in the mid-1980s it finally slipped below 20 percent. By 1993 it stood at 15.8 percent. In the old days it was one out of three workers; now it is one out of six or seven.

At first glance that sounds pretty bad; but at second glance the situation turns out to be even worse. In 1960 the overwhelming majority of unionized workers were in private industry, not the public-service sector; they worked for privately owned companies as opposed to governmental bodies. That has shifted dramatically over the past generation. The relative “de-industrialization” of America has driven abroad many industries whose workers used to be well-organized, and it has caused serious shrinkage in many others. The vacuum left by empty factories has been filled by service industries—hospitals, restaurants, retail stores—which have this merit from an organized labor point of view: They cannot flee offshore. But they have the disadvantage that their workers have been far more difficult to organize than were the older factory workers. The real growth sector of the labor movement in the last thirty years has been among government workers. This is very understandable: Government cannot leave town, it is constantly

expanding, and it will rarely or never fire you if you and your co-workers talk about forming a union.

The result of these changes is that the proportion of non-governmental workers who belong to unions in 1993 had sunk to 11.2 percent. Only one such worker out of every nine now belongs to a union, whereas in the late 1950s it was one in three. By contrast, nearly 40 percent of governmental workers are unionized. Today less than 60 percent of all union workers are in the private sector, while more than 40 percent are in the government sector.

But wait, the story gets even worse. Among the union members in the public-service sector are college professors, public school teachers, social workers, and holders of various other white-collar, college-educated governmental occupations. These people do not belong to the working class; they belong to the higher class. As a member of one of these unions myself (the National Education Association), I am not about to lament the fact that C-1 persons now have the protections afforded by labor unions. But in assessing the current strength of that old C-2 institution, the labor movement, it has to be borne in mind that nowadays it has lost its class purity. C-1 people have infiltrated it, and increasingly they have come to dominate it.

So there has been a threefold shift in the labor movement: an overall downward shift in union membership; an even greater downward shift in union membership in the private sector of the economy; and a shift from the purely C-2 character of the labor movement to a mixed-class character. All three shifts have operated to the disadvantage of the working class. In the old days the labor unions were the powerful voice of a well-organized, blue-collar class. Today that class is poorly organized and its spokesmen have a voice that is not only weaker but less exclusively devoted to working-class interests.

• **The Democratic Party.** The nature of the Democratic party has also changed dramatically in the last thirty years. The labor unions continue to play an important but far less powerful role in the party. Once they had star billing, but now they share the limelight with a number of other interests: pro-Israel, African-American, feminist, gay-lesbian, and others.

With the partial exception of blacks, none of the other leading groups in the Democratic party represent working-class interests. African-American interests cut across class lines, which means C-2 blacks have to compete for attention with C-1 and C-3 blacks. Affirmative-action programs have been helpful to C-2 blacks, but they are chiefly intended to benefit blacks from the top class, and such programs are of virtually no benefit to those in the bottom class. It may even be argued that neither has any other program backed by Democrats over the last twenty-five or thirty years been truly helpful to the lowest class. But whether efforts to help this bottom class have been successful or not, the disproportionately large size of the black lowest class has meant that a vast amount of the attention and energy of the African-American leadership has been invested in these efforts—attention and energy taken away from the interests of working-class blacks.

It might be objected that the feminist movement, like the African-American movement, is at least partially representa-

tive of C-2 women, since it too cuts across class lines. There is some truth to this, but not much; for feminism tends to be almost exclusively a C-1 phenomenon. Its most notable accomplishment—opening careers to women previously held either exclusively or disproportionately by men—has been at most only a slight benefit to C-2 women (and of course no benefit at all to C-3 women), while it has been an enormous boon to upper-class women. What is rarely noted, the opening of these careers to women benefits not only C-1 women but C-1 men and boys as well—the husbands and sons and daughters of these women. Despite a great deal of exaggerated, foolish, and sometimes dishonest talk about female solidarity, when a woman lands a high-paying job she shares her abundant paycheck with her husband and children, not with other women, especially not with other women from social classes beneath her own. The feminist movement has brought enormous financial benefits to the top class, above all to C-1 women, but to C-1 men and children as well.

In the New Deal era, when the Democratic party was a predominantly working-class party, a certain number of C-1 liberals played an important role in the party. It would be an exaggeration to say that these upper-class people had no desire to promote the interests of their class. But they were relatively few in number, and their quotient of class altruism was rather high; that is, they were attached to the Democratic party because they wanted to promote the interests of a class they did not themselves belong to, the working class. Besides, it was the job of the Republican party to look out for the interests of the upper class. But that has all changed. Nowadays vast numbers of C-1 liberals support the Democratic party; their social class altruism, to the degree it exists, is focused on the lowest class; and they have little or no concern with the interests of the working class. More important still, they no longer leave it to the Republicans to promote C-1 class interests; they insist that the Democratic party do this as well.

When I say C-1 altruism is focused on the lowest class, I do not mean to suggest that it has produced much in the way of genuine benefits for C-3 people. The expansion and the increasing degradation of the lowest class during the last twenty-five to thirty years suggest the hypothesis that C-1 liberal altruism in recent times has been bogus. A do-nothing or make-things-worse altruism carries with it certain benefits for those of us in the higher class: (a) it permits us to despise the working class, which we see as rife with racism and lack of sympathy for the poor; (b) it eases our conscience about the situation of the poor, since we are making every effort to help; and (c) in general it allows us to feel morally superior while requiring us to give up none of our privileges.

The progressive disintegration of political parties during the last generation—the decline in party loyalty, party discipline, and a party's ability to deliver the vote—has damaged C-2 interests. When compared to the typical member of the top class, a C-2 person has fewer individual resources: less education, less money, less social prestige, fewer influential connections,

fewer skills at negotiating the corridors of power. Hence solidarity, strength in numbers, group discipline become all the more important for members of the working class. Thus a decline in party solidarity and a corresponding rise in political individualism are political developments that play to C-1 strengths and C-2 weaknesses.

Finally, note must be taken of the obvious fact that the Democratic party, which held the White House for all but eight years (the Eisenhower years) during the previous era, has held the White House for only two terms (Carter and Clinton) in the more recent era. In other words, during the age when the party was more fully committed to the interests of the working class, it was also in a strong position to act on those commitments; while during an age of greatly diminished commitment to C-2 interests, the party's power to deliver on even this lesser commitment has shrunk.

• **The Catholic Church.** The Catholic church was not the only large denomination that used to be typically C-2 in its membership. But the Catholics were by far the largest, and they were disproportionately concentrated in the Northeastern quadrant of the country, the center of the urban industrial working class, which included such populous states as New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, New Jersey, and Massachusetts.

Through the fifties the Catholic church had the weaknesses you would expect of a predominantly C-2 church: it tended to authoritarianism, anti-intellectualism, narrow-mindedness, and poor taste. Its piety was plebeian, sometimes even vulgar. But it had great strengths as well: it was well-organized and well-disciplined; it was led by confident bishops, priests, and nuns—all three groups, especially the last two, of largely C-2 origins; its members had a high degree of organizational loyalty and commitment, which translated into a willingness to follow instructions handed down by the leadership. In those days when a bishop spoke politicians listened, for they could be sure the bishops had troops behind them.

All that changed in the latter half of the sixties—as a result partly of Vatican II, partly of the cultural revolution going on in the United States at that time, and partly of the upward mo-



"Well, somebody has to be the doomsayer around here!"

bility of great numbers of Catholics from C-2 to C-1 status. The semi-authoritarian style so congenial to a well-organized working class was out; the individualistic style so congenial to the top class was in. The confidence of the clerical leadership was badly shaken. The numbers of priests and especially of nuns declined. Organizational loyalty, as measured through money contributions and church attendance, deteriorated. Though bishops spoke more intelligently than ever, especially in documents issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, fewer listened, for no one believed that the bishops now commanded the loyalty of their troops.

The increasingly C-1 nature of the American Catholic church has weakened its appeal to C-2 people. It is a church they still find attractive, but not nearly so attractive as it was in the old days. The weakness of the contemporary Catholic church with C-2 people is especially glaring in the case of Hispanic immigrants, many of whom are at the lower end of the working class. In the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, the American Catholic church displayed a positive genius in its skill at recruiting, socializing, and mobilizing immigrants arriving in the United States from historically Catholic lands, e.g., Ireland, Italy, Poland. When they were committed Catholics to begin with, it kept them that way. When they were only nominal Catholics, it kept them from drifting away to other faiths, and it commonly turned them, and especially their children and grandchildren, into committed Catholics. In addition to its religious service to the immigrants and their children, the church helped perform a vital secular service as well: it helped Americanize them, persuading them of the merits of the American political, economic, and educational systems. The poor Catholics who migrated to America often came from the most degraded social groups in Europe. That so many of them were able to elevate themselves within two or three generations from such degradation to C-1 status certainly speaks well of America as a land of opportunity; but it also speaks well of the C-2 church that helped them rise.

But when it comes to Hispanic immigrants, this old genius at organizing and assimilating is no more. Great numbers of nominal Hispanic Catholics remain unconverted to committed Catholic status; and increasingly great numbers of immigrants and their children have deserted Catholicism altogether for Protestant churches of the Evangelical and Pentecostal variety—a loss without precedent in the history of American Catholic immigration. Nor is the Catholic church performing its upward mobility function very well. Many Hispanics have actually slipped from low C-2 status into the bottom class; that is, they have fallen from being marginally useful members of American society into the category of the superfluous. In fairness, however, it ought to be acknowledged that American institutions generally have done something less than an outstanding job of assimilating Hispanics and moving them up the social ladder. If the Catholic church record is poor, it is certainly no worse than that of other institutions, and it is better than most.

In part, of course, this failure is the result of diminished Catholic resources. There are no longer enough priests and sisters, no longer enough dollars to operate a lot of free or low-tuition

Catholic schools. This shortage has been aggravated by the fact that migrants from Hispanic countries—unlike earlier migrants from, say, Ireland, Italy, and Quebec—have generally not been supported by an influx of priests and nuns from the old country.

But in part, too, it is the result of a stylistic change in American Catholicism. A Catholicism topheavy with C-1 values is socially and culturally very far removed from poor Hispanic immigrants; whereas seventy or a hundred years ago American Catholics were not many steps above the people just getting off the boat. And of course it is this stylistic change that is largely responsible, or at least strongly correlated with, the decline in resources. The newer, predominantly C-1 church produces few priests and nuns; and despite the enormous wealth of C-1 Catholics, a wealth that would have seemed incredible to the grandparents of the current generation, there is less generosity in church-giving than there was in the days of the grandparents.

The aim of this essay has not been to paint an overall picture of the American class system. Rather it has been to account for the relative absence of social class analysis in contemporary America. Hence it has focused on the decline of the American working class, the class which once provided the social base for such an analysis.

Consistent with its aim, the essay has said little about the top or C-1 class and virtually nothing about the C-3 or lowest class. In passing, however, it might be noted that a thriving working class is necessary for the amelioration of the condition of the lowest class. For when the working class flourishes, members of the lowest class have abundant opportunities for upward mobility; but when the working class withers, these chances for upward mobility wither along with it. Difficult as the condition of the American C-2 class is today, the condition of the C-3 class is far, far worse. It is a grave scandal that demonstrates, among other things, the social and political incompetence of the nation's ruling classes. If America's top class is living in a kind of secular paradise and the working class in a kind of purgatory, the lowest class is living in a kingdom of the damned. The only thing missing from the worst neighborhoods of our big cities is a large sign saying, "Abandon all hope, ye who have the misfortune to be born and raised here."

I am afraid this has not been a very hopeful article. If my account has been even approximately correct, it suggests that the years to come will be as unpromising as the years just gone by, if not worse. For there is no likelihood in the foreseeable future that the working class will rally, or that what were once its three great institutions—the labor movement, the Democratic party, the Catholic church—will be restored to its control. But in the absence of a strong working class, there is no significant social base for a social class analysis of American society; and without such an analysis, there is no way of painting an honest and accurate picture of contemporary American society.

I hate to end on so pessimistic a note, but it is not easy to find grounds for optimism. □

WHAT WOULD JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY SAY?

ON ABORTION & EUTHANASIA

TODD DAVID WHITMORE

In recent years, there has been a renaissance of interest in the work of John Courtney Murray, including conferences on his writings, conferences which have issued in edited volumes formed around the question, "What can we retrieve from Murray's work that will help us address the problems of our day?" This interest is not merely historical, but arises, in part, out of a concern that society may be losing its moorings. Perhaps Murray—the man who both preferred and exhibited the "cool and dry" discourse of a civil society—can provide some tools to guide our reflection. The effort to retrieve Murray's work extends well beyond strictly religious boundaries, for example, in Michael Perry's *Love and Power: The Role of Religion and Morality in American Politics* (Oxford, 1991). Perry's effort to develop an understanding of "ecumenical political dialogue" is indebted in large part to Murray. The epigraph to the key chapter in Perry's book quotes Murray, and points up the anxiety of those who are trying to retrieve his work: "Civility dies with the death of dialogue." In a society increasingly characterized by the distorted rhetoric and siege tactics of special interest groups, the practice of dialogue, indeed, appears to be vanishing.

The practice is in particular danger where fundamental beliefs are at stake. How is one to enter into dialogue in a pluralistic society while remaining true to one's own religious or moral tradition? The questions of abortion and physician-assisted suicide are salient cases in point. They take on a linked urgency because of a Seattle federal district court judge's ruling against laws prohibiting assisted suicide: the decision was based on present abortion law favoring the right to privacy and freedom of choice. Using Murray's corpus—his concepts and distinctions—for direction is especially difficult here because he did not speak on either abortion or assisted suicide. Still,

this should not keep us from trying to discern what we might say in the context of the social theory he left us.

The scholarly literature has begun to address what might be said about abortion in the context of Murray's social theory. One example is Mary Segers's essay, "Murray, American Pluralism, and the Abortion Controversy" (in Robert P. Hunt and Kenneth L. Grasso, eds., *John Courtney Murray and the American Civil Conversation*, Eerdmans, 1992). By analogy to Murray's brief but to-the-point comments on contraception, she argues that abortion is a matter of privacy and therefore ought not to be restricted by law. The comments on contraception come primarily from a memo Murray wrote to Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston in 1964 or 1965 when Cushing was asked to respond to efforts to repeal laws against contraceptive use. Cushing looked to Murray for advice. In the memo and in passing comments elsewhere, Murray refers to the distinction between public and private morality, and argues that contraception is of the latter type. He also makes a distinction between morality and law. The two distinctions are related because matters of private morality are not to be



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translated into public law except in extreme cases where a grave evil is involved. Contraception may be immoral according to Catholic teaching, but because it is a private matter between two adults, and the gravity of the infraction is not severe, the sale and use of contraceptives ought not to be prohibited. Finally, Murray also appeals to religious liberty, citing the fact that a number of other religious denominations allow for contraception. He admits limits to religious liberty—violations “against public peace, against public morality, or against the rights of others” are to be prohibited by law—but the sale and use of contraceptives to and by married couples transgress none of them.

In her essay, Segers moves directly from these comments on law and contraception to law and abortion; since contraception is a matter of privacy, so is abortion. She writes: “[Murray] argued that contraception was a matter of private morality because (1) the practice was widespread; (2) many people do not consider it to be wrong; and (3) numerous religious groups approve it as legally permissible and morally right in many if not most circumstances. The same criteria apply to the issue of abortion: (1) the practice is widespread now and was widely practiced before 1973, when it was illegal; (2) many people do not consider it to be wrong; and (3) numerous groups approve it as legally permissible and morally acceptable in many instances as part of a moral duty to responsible parenthood.” At the core of Segers’s interpretation of Murray is her understanding of his concept of consensus. Public morality is a “function of consensus” and such consensus is lacking for laws prohibiting abortion.

But Segers misunderstands Murray’s concept of consensus. It cannot be reduced to public opinion and the practices of the day. Murray is clear on this point when he writes:

It has been pointed out to me more than once, in discussions of the American consensus, that the word is misleading. In current speech, connotations have clustered round the word that form a barrier to an understanding of its classic sense....Today, of course, the word is often taken to mean simply “majority opinion”....These usages, however valid elsewhere, are departures from the technical constitutional sense that the word bears in the Western tradition....The validity of the consensus is radically independent of its possible status as either majority or minority opinion. Moreover, the Declaration of Independence did not hazard the conjecture, “This is the convergent trend of opinion among us....” It is the affirmation: “We hold these truths....” Or in the equivalent formula: “This is the public consensus.”

What is at the core of Murray’s concept of consensus, with its reference to “truths,” is a realist epistemology: moral truths are grounded in the structure of reality itself. It is the correspondence of beliefs to that reality that makes the beliefs true. He is explicit on this point:

Every proposition, if it is to be argued, supposes an epistemology of some sort. The epistemology of the American Proposition was, I think, made clear by the Declaration of Independence in the famous phrase: “We hold these

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Murray's realist epistemology is of particular import for the issue of abortion. If it is descriptively true, as official Catholic teachings say, that the embryo-fetus is, in all probability, a human person, then the presumption must be that it is also morally true that one ought not take its life. Moreover, if the embryo-fetus is in all probability a person, then the presumption must also be that abortion is a matter of public morality: a human life is at stake. Finally, if the embryo-fetus is in all probability a person, then taking its life would not be a matter of religious liberty. Religious freedom has limits. It cannot include acts "against public peace, against public morality, or against the rights of others." If the embryo-fetus is in all probability a person, then abortion possibly goes beyond the first limit, probably transgresses the second, and almost certainly violates the third.

Any argument on abortion made from within the Murray tradition—that is, within the context of the moral and social theory he provides us—must begin, therefore, with three presumptions: that official Catholic teachings on the status of the embryo-fetus and the morality of taking its life are true, that as a result abortion is a matter of public morality, and that laws limiting recourse to abortion are appropriate. If schools seek to make another argument on any of these points, the burden of proof is on them to show how they are operating within the Murray tradition. Segers's argument would require a different understanding of doctrinal development, a changed episte-

The heads of mushrooms
were small globes in grasses
where they'd come overnight.
What sudden promptings had brought them up whole?

My mouth blurted out Swedish—
Ga forsiktigt—but I could not translate
the words, knew I'd used them well,
my aproned grandmother suddenly there among lilacs
on her porch behind me.

He squatted there amazed, signaled me close.
and an old recognition came back
of things that thrive under darkness,
stirrings that draw toward light
then channel deeply to dreams; or slip out
when we react on impulse.

Our wholeness depends too
on what we've forgotten, the mirror of dreams.
Some parts of the past reach and grow
until they are something else,
or shift like soils into lost silts.
The future parades from the past;
underground twists exert their ways,
our stories going on in the dark
even when no one is watching.

mology, and an altered understanding of consensus. This makes her case that she is responding from within the context of Murray's moral and social theory rather strained. I do not think that her argument can be sustained in the end.

What is left unanswered so far is the question of precisely what kind of laws are appropriate. Here, Segers's use of the distinction between morality and law is illuminating—as long as it is not made into a separation between morality and law. While the presumption is that matters of public morality should be addressed by the law, the relationship between the two is not a one-to-one correspondence. This is because the public may not be ready to receive a law that simply mirrors what is morally true. Murray was cautious about the degree to which law should lead public opinion. “Law and morality are indeed related, even though differentiated. That is, the premises of law are ultimately found in the moral law. And human legislation does look to the moralization of society. But, mindful of its own nature and mode of action, it must not moralize excessively; otherwise it tends to defeat even its own more modest aims, by bringing itself into contempt.” It is the tension inherent in the understanding of morality and law being “related but differentiated” that makes it difficult to prescribe a precise law. In public debate on abortion, the tensed relationship has snapped, with the two sides of what has been dubbed the “culture wars” taking what remains in opposite directions: one side claims that (objective) morality ought to be translated directly into law while the other side counters that (private) morality and law are utterly separate. From the perspective of the Murray tradition, both of these arguments fail.

How is the tensed relationship between morality and law to be maintained? In the case of abortion in the United States, the two need to be brought closer together; that is, law must be brought closer to objective morality if the two are to remain in relationship. However, simply changing the law will not be sufficient because of the problem of “contempt” for any law that would now seek to limit access to abortion services. The only way to avoid the problem of possible contempt is to change public opinion. Put another way, in order to change the law so that there will be less distance between it and what Catholic teaching argues is objective morality, it is necessary to begin with means other than the law itself. For example, in writing on censorship, Murray was clear that particularly in the area of sexual belief and practice, law cannot lead. “No society should expect very much in the way of moral uplift from its censorship statutes. Indeed, the whole criminal code is only a minimal force. Particularly in the field of sexual morality the expectations are small; they are smaller than anywhere else.”

In the same article on censorship, Murray indicates the appropriate starting point: intermediate institutions. “[Law] enforces only what is minimally acceptable, and in this sense socially necessary. Beyond this, society must look to other institutions for the elevation and maintenance of its moral stan-

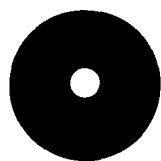
dards—that is, to the church, the home, the school, and the whole network of voluntary associations that concern themselves with public morality in one or another aspect.” He goes on to comment that persons in such institutions, especially those associated with the Catholic community, should not do everything that is legal for them to do. Certain forms of activity would have “the disastrous effect of obscuring from the public view the true visage of the church of God’s kingdom of truth and freedom, justice and love.” Therefore, even in instances where protests, blockades, and boycotts are legal, such activities may not be reflective of the church as a community of the people of God. “The chief danger is lest the church be identified in the public mind as a power-association.”

We are left, then, with this problem: We need to help shape public opinion so as to reduce the distance between American law and Catholic teaching on abortion. Law itself is a bad vehicle for this. It is necessary to turn to intermediate institutions, particularly the church itself. How can the Catholic community become “the true visage of the church of God’s kingdom of truth and freedom, justice and love” and not simply a power-association? Segers makes a recommendation that is suggestive: “Were Murray alive today, I think he would stress the church’s positive role in society rather than its political role in shaping a more restrictive abortion policy. Murray would hold that prudence dictates that the church should not focus primarily on using coercive law to restrict abortion; rather, the church’s role in this controversy should be to exemplify Christian charity by using its resources to assist women who are involuntarily pregnant.”

Such assistance appears to me to be precisely in line with what it means for the church to be a “visage” of the community of God. Such a community, by its practice, helps to create in a noncoercive manner a context within which Catholic teaching on abortion appears more plausible and life in accordance with it more possible. The only problem is with the way in which Segers appears to pose this activity as an *alternative* to efforts to shape law. She suggests the church is to aid women “rather than” help shape public law. As a result, she tends to separate law and morality in a way that is foreign to Murray’s social theory, though it is consistent with her argument that abortion is a private matter. However, from the perspective of a tradition that seeks to keep law and morality related, aiding women is not an alternative to law; it is, among other things, the concrete precondition for bringing morality and law closer together.

Exactly what laws are appropriate at what point in time remains a matter of prudential judgment. What Murray’s writings leave us is simply a *direction* in which the law should go. Judgments about the adequacy of any proposed abortion law must be made in terms of two questions: (1) In comparison to the laws in place, does it move in the direction of a greater harmony between Catholic teaching on objective morality, on the one hand, and law, on the other? (2) Have we as a church been successful in helping to shape a society where a more restrictive law is plausible? There has been much

reflection and action on the first question and not enough of either on the second. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops' 1985 "Reaffirmation" of their earlier "Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities" states that aiding women who might otherwise consider abortion in the care of their children is simply an "ideal." While there are numerous pregnancy care centers nationwide, their efforts are dwarfed by the magnitude of the problem of unintended pregnancies. The Catholic community has hardly begun to comprehend adequately—let alone respond to adequately—the enormity of the task of creating the kind of society where Catholic teaching on taking the life of the embryo-fetus is more plausible, and life in accordance with it more possible.



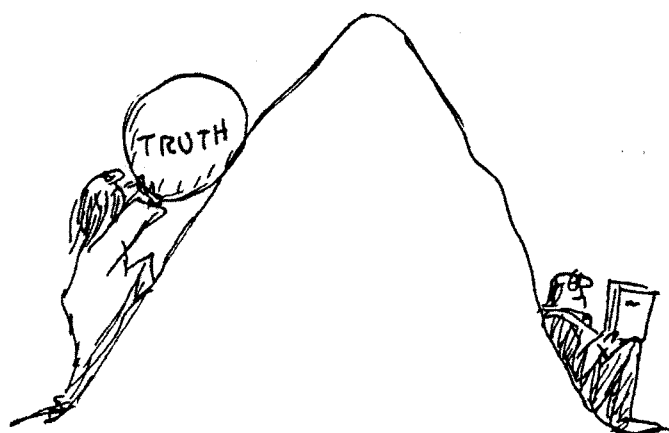
On May 3, Judge Barbara Rothstein of United States District Court in Seattle ruled that a 140-year-old ban on assisted suicide in the state of Washington violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Judge Rothstein made the link with the abortion rulings of the Supreme Court explicit with direct quotes from the 1992 case, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*: "The suffering of a terminally ill person cannot be deemed any less intimate or personal, or any less deserving of protection from unwarranted governmental interference than that of a pregnant woman....Like the abortion decision, the decision of a terminally ill person to end his or her life 'involves the most intimate and personal choices a person can make in a lifetime,' and constitutes a 'choice central to personal dignity and autonomy.'" In other words, Judge Rothstein's presumption is that the decision is a private one. She also tries to circumscribe the right to privacy, by arguing that in the case of assisted suicide, such a right applies only to terminally ill, mentally competent adults. This is because, the state has a "compelling interest" which includes "deterring suicide by young people and others with a significant natural life span ahead of them....[T]his case is not about people for whom suicide would abruptly cut life short."

It will be important to follow this effort to limit the right to privacy in cases of assisted suicide. The *New York Times* (May

6, 1994) has made a passionate case that Dr. Jack Kevorkian lacks "deep knowledge of his patients or the diseases that afflict them," and that his rhetoric is "messianic"; if limited, assisted suicide is to become a legal reality, "all those concerned with insuring that doctor-assisted suicide is an available but carefully administered option...had better get into this fray." Efforts to demonstrate state interest on abortion have met with very limited success. In part this is because there is difficulty in identifying a consensus on precisely what restrictions should be put in place. Rothstein, however, appears confident that such consensus is possible with regard to assisted suicide, and that confidence is echoed by Ronald Dworkin, a philosopher of law and the author of *Life's Dominion: An Argument about Abortion and Euthanasia* (Knopf, 1993). In an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, he addresses the Seattle ruling and the concern that it will lead down a "slippery slope." These concerns include, as Dworkin notes, the danger of American doctors following the practice in the Netherlands, where lethal injections are given incompetent or unconscious patients who have no way of making their desires known. Dworkin adds that the risk of persons requesting assisted suicide out of a sense of guilt that they are burdening their loved ones is "a more plausible version of the slippery slope argument." Still, he concludes that the risk of any slippery slope is only "a speculative one" as opposed to the "great and known evil" of allowing people to die "in great pain or a drugged stupor."

How then to respond from within the context of Murray's social theory? The indicators at first appear mixed. On the question of privacy, there are analogies with both abortion on the one hand and contraception on the other. Suicide is analogous to abortion—and therefore not a matter of privacy—because the grave matter of taking a human life is involved. Indeed, with suicide, it is *certain* that one is taking a human life, while with abortion, it is a strong probability. When the question is abortion, the moral injunction is that it is wrong to *risk* murder. On the other hand, assisted suicide is analogous to contraception in that—at least in the cases that Rothstein and Dworkin want to allow—the person to be killed not only consents, but actively seeks out the assistance. Here, the privacy of the relationship between doctor and patient is analogous—with some crucial disanalogies—to the privacy of the spousal relationship in the purchase and use of contraceptives.

Public opinion on assisted suicide is also difficult to read. Voters in California and Washington have rejected measures that would have legalized euthanasia, but by relatively small margins. A version of the question is on the ballot in Oregon this November. Perhaps more telling is the response of the jury in the Jack Kevorkian case in Michigan. Under Michigan law, Kevorkian should have been convicted. Physician-assisted suicide is illegal. However, there is a "medication clause" in the law to allow the prescription of drugs that might shorten a patient's life even as they relieve pain. This is so that the law can not be used to challenge the prescription, for instance, of low doses of morphine. Still, Kevorkian seized on this clause to make the case that the real and only aim was to relieve suffering, even though carbon monoxide—used to kill Thomas



W. Hyde, who was suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease—has no medicinal value and is certain to bring about immediate death. When pressed by the prosecution, Kevorkian equivocated, "I had a fairly good idea that he would die, but my expectation was that his suffering would end." The fact that the jury did not convict him when, under the law, it should have, is a strong indicator of where much of public sentiment lies. In post-trial interviews with jurors, the language of private choice came to the fore: "I don't feel it's our obligation to choose for someone else how much pain and suffering they can go through....I feel each person should be able to make their own choice." This statement makes clear that the law itself, and not Kevorkian, was on trial. If the jury thought the law was fair, he would have been convicted. In deciding the case, the jurors, in effect, threw out a law that was in their minds not so much unconstitutional as in conflict with their feelings and beliefs.

A response from the Murray tradition might offer a two-pronged approach. First, the gravity of what is at stake in assisted suicide is much greater than that of contraception. Therefore, even if it could be argued to be a matter of private morality, it should be one of those instances where the law still ought to prohibit the practice. There are at present about thirty states that have such laws. Unlike the case of abortion then, it is not a matter of putting new laws into place, but primarily of maintaining those that are already on the books. Still, given the tenuous nature of whatever consensus may exist against assisted suicide, it is imperative that Catholics address the issue of the role that intermediate institutions can play. In particular, the church can foster attitudes and practices which make the norms of Catholic teaching more plausible and possible to live by. This would require an expansive practice of hospice on the part of the Catholic community. As in the case of aiding women with unintended pregnancies, it would have to be of a magnitude we have yet to fully realize conceptually or in practice.

The second prong of the argument for laws prohibiting physician-assisted suicide is that the practice is not, in the end, a private one. Traditional Catholic arguments against suicide have included the case that it is a sin against the common good; suicide robs the commonweal of a person who can still contribute. The core of this position is the belief that the human person is fundamentally social. However true this may be—and I think that it is—it is not likely to have immediate appeal in a society that valorizes the individual and personal choice. In such a society, private shades into public at the point where one person's choice is in some way coercive of another person's way of life. Here one can draw from an analogy with abortion, but this time to argue in the opposite direction that Rothstein and Dworkin wish to go: Over the course of the twenty-plus years since *Roe v. Wade*, abortion, although founded on a right to privacy, has become a question of public morality and law. For example, in *Casey*, the plurality opinion took recourse in the doctrine of "reliance." That is to say,

they judged that even if *Roe v. Wade* is not the most felicitously argued ruling, so many persons have built their lives around its existence that it should remain the law of the land. People have shaped their lives around the expectation that abortion services will be provided. It is then a small step to the argument that abortion services ought to be provided in a national health-care plan. What began as a negative right to privacy—a freedom from government interference—has become in the space of twenty years a positive demand for services administered and paid for by the state. Through the process of taxation or payroll deduction, many persons deeply opposed to abortion would be coerced into supporting a practice that goes against their consciences. At the present time, it may seem only a remote possibility that physician-assisted suicide will become part of a national health plan. No doubt, such prospects for abortion services appeared similarly remote in 1973.

The slippery slope that I am referring to here, then, is quite different from the one that Dworkin and others highlight. There may well be a danger that once physician-assisted suicide is allowed for mentally competent, terminally ill patients, the practice will spread to allow other forms of euthanasia. However, even if this were never to occur, the analogy with abortion indicates that there would be another slide: Whatever case could be made for the practice of assisted suicide being private in its early stages of legal acceptance, it will inevitably become part of a government policy that requires positive public support from citizens who have deeply held moral and religious beliefs against it. Taxes are only one way this can manifest itself. Catholic medical professionals and hospital administrators would have to decide what degree of participation in such a policy would be possible without sacrificing integrity. Participation lends support to a program that is immoral; but decisions for greater integrity may leave Catholic practitioners and hospitals so marginalized that their service in other areas will be compromised. If physician-assisted suicide, on however limited a basis, is made legal, the very questions that Catholic medical professionals are beginning to address now with regard to the possible inclusion of abortion in national health care policy will arise again, only this time with more force. It will no longer be possible to single out abortion as an isolated issue. The question will have to be asked whether the practice of medicine in America is fundamentally at odds with Catholic values and norms.

From the perspective of the Murray tradition, then, there appear to be a number of parallels between abortion and assisted suicide. Both involve at least the high probability that a human life is being taken.

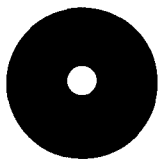
This leads to the presumption that the issues are matters of public morality. Against the argument that assisted suicide is a private matter between a person and her physician, the Catholic tradition counters that suicide is an act against the common good. Moreover, the fact that the legal protection of presumably private choices inevitably leads to the call for positive governmental support suggests that the human per-

son is more social than liberal political theory, with its accent on the individual, recognizes. The question of precisely what laws to seek to put in place will always depend on prudential judgment that takes into consideration the state of the American public. While consensus is not reducible to public opinion, legislators are wise to recognize the limits of leading with the law. Intermediate institutions have an irreplaceable role in society. The most neglected requirement of the Catholic community is its obligation to exemplify through its own practice the kind of community where official teaching on abortion and assisted suicide is plausible. It is only in this way that there can be any hope that other persons, communities, and constituencies will reshape their beliefs on these two fundamental issues. Aiding and joining women in the care of the children for the full eighteen years that is required, and providing hospice care for the duration needed are not only ways to exemplify the "true visage of the Church of God's kingdom"; they also constitute the most prudent way to proceed if we are concerned about the common good of the earthly city. □

SCREEN

BLOODY-MINDED

STONE'S 'KILLERS'



Oliver Stone hears America screaming, so he joins right in. His latest film, *Natural Born Killers*, tries to depict our putative love affair with violence both satirically and horrifically by telling the story of two lovers (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis) who are spree killers. The first half of the movie displays their monstrous idea of fun and shows how the trash media capitalize on the carnage. The balance of the story focuses on a TV interview of Harrelson in prison conducted by a Geraldo type (Robert Downey, Jr.); the interview goes awry and more blood flows.

In some of his previous movies, Stone used extreme realism to so intensify the violent passages that the result verged on nightmare while remaining basically veristic. This method helped make *Salvador* (still Stone's best movie), the first half of *Platoon*, and much of *Talk Radio* (an underrated work) his finest filmmaking. *Natural Born Killers* is a departure: an ostentatiously surreal movie from beginning to end, it doesn't employ nightmarishness only at violent moments; the whole work is a bad dream. But, in art, even a nightmare must have its own logic. How coherent is *Natural Born Killers*? And how penetrating is it?

Shall we excuse the fact that much of what we see on screen flatly defies belief? Of course, the lovers wouldn't be kept in the same (all-male) prison. Of course, the marksmen guarding Harrelson during the interview wouldn't all lounge around inside the same room with him, thus allowing the killer to grab a gun after he's distracted them with a dirty joke. Of course,

all of the many marksmen wouldn't be shot down or disarmed without anyone getting off a single well-aimed shot. Of course, the ninety-nine-pound Juliette Lewis, with model-skinny arms and no karate training, couldn't duke it out with a truck driver and, later, an F.B.I. agent and easily win both fights. And this nationally notorious couple, whose faces have been on the cover of *People* magazine, spend night after night in motels for months without managers and maids recognizing them? (But, when it suits the plot, people recognize the pair instantly.) And should we ignore the fact that other nightmare comedies—such as *Dr. Strangelove* and *A Clockwork Orange*—achieve their satirical ends without sacrificing all logic and verisimilitude? (Remember how real the War Room seemed in *Dr. Strangelove* and how persuasive were all the technical details leading up to the missile strike?) Since Oliver Stone has made a nightmare, shouldn't we cut him some slack in the credibility department? After all, a truly surreal style should cover a multitude of incredibilities.

Trouble is, Stone hasn't achieved any such style. Garishness, certainly, and plenty of high-tech display, but not style. In the opening scene—a slaughter in a greasy spoon—computer technology has allowed Stone to seemingly perch his camera on a bullet as it whizzes toward a victim's skull, and on a knife as it zooms toward another victim's back. The result is, if you'll pardon the word in this context, overkill. It's not horror we feel, or even detachment from horror, but "Gosh golly gee-whizz, how do those Hollywood guys do these stunts?"

There is something thuddingly literalist about all the visual effects in *Killers*. If Ms. Lewis dreamily speaks of angels to her lover, Stone floats angels up into the sky. If Lewis fantasizes about horses flying, we see flying horses. If Stone needs a symbol of coiled violence, we get coiled rattlesnakes. In fact, there's a rattlesnake motif running through the first half of the movie, cumulating in a visit to an old American Native who lives so sagely and with such self-control that he can—you



"They gave you thirty-five years—there has to be more to it than you getting quoted out of context."

guessed it!—tame rattlesnakes.

Stone's dramatic strategies often turn out to be incoherent. For instance, he stages a flashback to Lewis's family life, rife with child abuse and incest, as a TV situation comedy that includes canned audience laughter. Given *Killers*'s satirical animus against the media, this choice may seem both clever and apropos. But, actually, it isn't. If this is a memory of Lewis's, why is it cast as situation comedy? Wouldn't she instead remember her victimization as a soap opera or as one of those prime-time social-problem-of-the-week movies? Or if we aren't seeing the incest from Lewis's point-of-view but from a more or less objective standpoint, why make situation comedy part of the indictment of violence? Some sitcoms may be klutzy and unfunny, but most are decent enough in their intentions, depict family life with a mixture of skepticism and affection, and certainly don't promote violence or incest. Granted, Stone's stylization distances us enough from the domestic horror so that his satire isn't overwhelmed by our revulsion, but the satire itself misfires.

The pain and death that the protagonists visit on people are stylized, too. The victims are photographed in close-up at the moment of death and are made to look stupid, craven, repellent, and bereft of dignity. Late in the movie, mystical murderer Harrelson informs his interviewer that all people have committed at least one act for which they deserve to die. Stone's staging of the death agonies seems to support his killer-hero's view.

But there are two exceptions. That aforementioned Native American foresees his own death and goes to it with courage and dignity. The strenuously politically correct Oliver Stone won't be caught photographing any such martyr of white imperialism as pop-eyed or sweaty with fear as he goes to meet the Great Spirit.

And, in the movie's best scene, Harrelson and Lewis are in a motel room making love with the TV set on. We see many violent images on the tube, apparently including one of a girl bound and gagged. The couple quarrel and Lewis leaves the room in a huff. Only then do we see that the tied-up girl isn't a televised image but a real person forced to watch her captors have sex while awaiting her own demise. Hers is real horror laced with satire.

But perhaps it's only because we never got to know that girl that we can feel at least a trace of fear and pity for her. Since Stone expends much of his cinematic energy making us despise all the other victims, the net effect of *Killers* is to make us feel that all humanity should be slaughtered for cravenness, vulgarity, and physical unattractiveness. But then what happens to the film's satire? Satire, after all, is a chastisement of morals and manners in the service of human decency. But Stone's derision seems directed against humanity itself. You can see this most clearly in the interview scenes between Harrelson and Robert Downey, Jr. Media maven Downey comes off looking and sounding like a maniac, while killer Harrelson keeps his cool. This could be a legitimate satirical reversal of our expectations if Stone zeroed in on some moment in the interview in which Downey's realization of his own lack of conviction in the face

of the killer's certitude drove the journalist into a frenzy. Instead, the director has Downey talk frantically, crazily from the start so that we despise him for his style rather than for his opportunism. Satire should be savage, but Stone's methods are cheap.

Not surprisingly, the entire supporting cast, stuck with playing oafs, cretins, and slimeballs, has a rough time of it at Stone's hands. Almost everybody is wildly overdirected, with the great Tommy Lee Jones, forced to yell his every line, delivering the worst performance of all. Only Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis are allowed to bring some variety and color to the proceedings. Perhaps the actors benefited from the fact that, by story's end, they are virtually Stone's surrogates, dispatching the rest of the cast with a relish that their creator, I fear, shares.

That great radical magazine, *Entertainment Weekly*, has pronounced *Natural Born Killers* "revolutionary" (as well as "brilliant" and "hypnotic"). Is it? A revolution of consciousness, perhaps, is what Stone aims to bring about? Trash TV, tabloids, much American cinema and fiction, all contribute nowadays to a sickening buzz that is a perfect accompaniment to, and perhaps an incitement of, the violence that is rending the fabric of American life. Did Oliver Stone hope to capture this buzz on film and amplify it so egregiously that his audience would finally beg for silence and sanity? Perhaps. But a really good orator knows how to silence a roomful of loudmouths. He lowers his voice.

RICHARD ALLEVA

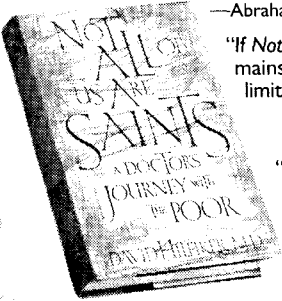
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What the other Hand was doing

Several significant judicial biographies have appeared in the past few years. It would be interesting to speculate about the reasons for this. Perhaps as we continue to engage in what appears to be a national identity crisis the lives of judges, dedicated as they are to explicating the constitutional principles that hold the nation together, have a talismanic affect. It is therefore doubly interesting to find in these biographies of William Brennan and Learned Hand, that the judges themselves have such differing perspectives about the Constitution and its interpretation.

Justice Brennan and Judge Hand (though considered for years to be the "tenth justice," Hand was never elevated to the Supreme Court) are archetypal jurists for the two principal schools of legal thought. Those who advocate for "judicial restraint" are fond of quoting the late Judge Hand's statement that he would find it "irk-some to be ruled by a bevy of Platonic Guardians." Alternatively, one would be hard-pressed to find a better example of Guardian-like behavior than the often countermajoritarian decisions of Justice Brennan.

As the judges differ, so too do their biographers. Kim Eisler, though knowledgeable about legal issues (in 1986 he was appointed to manage the *Legal Times*), is a journalist best known for the book *Shark Tank: Greed, Politics, and the Collapse of Finely Kumble*. Gerald Gunther, on the other hand, is a law professor and author of a very popular textbook on constitutional law. One expects to get from Eisler a very readable popular account and he does not disappoint. A reader need bring little or no knowledge of the Supreme Court to Eisler's book and still gain some understanding of Brennan's influence on American life.

A JUSTICE FOR ALL

William J. Brennan, Jr., and the Decisions that Transformed America
Kim Isaac Eisler
Simon and Schuster, \$22, 303 pp.

LEARNED HAND

The Man and the Judge
Gerald Gunther, with a Foreword by Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr.
Alfred A. Knopf, \$35, 818 pp.

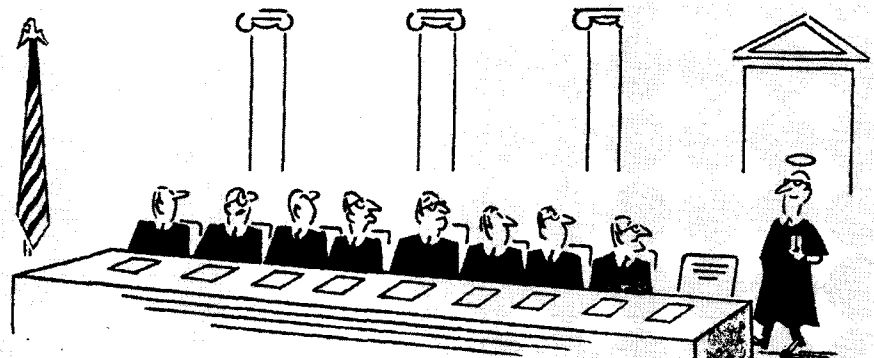
Paul A. Sracic

Unfortunately, this accessibility is sometimes purchased at the cost of analysis. For example, in discussing Justice Brennan's influence on Justice Blackmun's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, Eisler does not even begin to confront the intricate social and legal debates that surround the abortion case. Eisler notes the irony of a Catholic judge instigating a decision establishing abortion rights, yet provides little insight into how Brennan, a devout Catholic, reconciled his religious and legal beliefs. Is it enough to simply mention Brennan's oath of office, or to say that "the Constitution was his Bible"? Such statements reflect a fierce devotion to legal positivism, and hardly conform with Eisler's account of Brennan's fascination with Thomas Aquinas. Eisler

is a champion, not a critic. In this way, the biographer can be seen to mimic Brennan who "reached the decision first, then worked on the best reasoning that could 'capture the court.'" The extension of the legal doctrine of a "right to privacy" to euthanasia and other difficult questions is perhaps the unfortunate result of this method. In a curious way, Eisler's book is guilty of the same cart-before-the-horse approach. In both cases explanations are demanded that are not forthcoming.

In comparison, you come away from Gunther's book feeling as if you have actually met and discussed the issues of the day with the late judge. (Perhaps this is the result of Gunther's personal relationship with Hand. He served as Hand's law clerk in the early 1950s). Gunther's portrait of Hand in some ways mirrors the judge's own sense of the importance of details. For example, Gunther reminds us that, in more than fifty years as a judge, Learned Hand found only two laws unconstitutional. Now, if Gunther's purpose was simply to applaud Hand's practice of "judicial restraint," there would have been little need to look closely at the question of why it was so important to Hand not to overturn legislation. Gunther, however, spends a good part of this lengthy work answering just this question.

Throughout his life, Hand was a skeptic



"Ah, they've finally decided on someone..."

tic about all truths, legal or otherwise, Gunther explains. This made Hand extremely cautious, even timid, as he approached his personal affairs. As a judge, this skepticism manifested itself in a self-conscious reluctance to correct the constitutional interpretation of legislative majorities, even when he thought those interpretations lacked merit. He was a self-styled "skeptical liberal" whose modest faith in democracy was aptly put when he said that it was "not as bad as it seems." Yet this skeptical endorsement of democracy was more support than Hand was willing to give to the authority of any group of unelected judges—even (he might say especially) if he were included among them. Whereas Eisler cites with admiration a 1968 speech in which Brennan talks about the potency of the Fourteenth Amendment when used to remove inequities in society, Hand advocated for a constitutional amendment that would spell out exactly what the vague phrases of this amendment mean. In this way, he hoped to limit the discretion available to judges. Gunther underscores that it was Hand's skepticism about individual reason that made him reluctant to allow judges to exercise an absolute veto over the collective wisdom of the masses. Gunther connects Hand's skepticism with the teachings of his philosophy professors at Harvard, William James and George Santayana. These teachers clearly left their mark, encouraging Hand's already "emerging skepticism."

Perhaps one might be able to find the source of Brennan's contrasting confidence in himself and in judicial absolutes within the teachings of Aquinas, his favorite philosopher. Eisler reports that Justice Brennan often spent nights reading the works of Saint Thomas. He adds that "just as Aquinas had written that knowledge arises from reason, it was reason and fairness, not precedent and law, that would dictate Brennan's jurisprudence." Brennan's self-proclaimed ambition while on the bench was "to provide human dignity to every man, woman, and child on the planet." Interestingly enough, Hand had his own noble aspirations. For example, in a speech that might well have been made by Brennan, Hand claimed that at times I can have the hope that in America time may at length mitigate

our fierce individualism, may teach us the knowledge we so sorely lack that each of us must learn to realize himself more in our communal life whose formal expression is and as I believe will continue to be the law.

Obviously, the difference between Brennan and Hand lies in their choice of means. Learned Hand did not feel that judges could mandate change. Note the "hope" he expresses that the people will reform themselves. Inheriting a family tradition of Jeffersonianism, Hand maintained a cautious faith in the democratic spirit, and a concomitant reluctance to allow judges to thwart popular decisions. Hand recognized the problem of a tyrannical majority, and was vigilant in protecting freedom of speech, a right that he felt was crucial to the maintenance of democracy itself. Still, for Hand "the proper response to the flaws of democracy was to develop the habits essential to the survival of the democratic system."

As the title of Eisler's work indicates, Brennan's goals were more ambitious. While the justice's aspirations were admirable, the paradox remains that in the aftermath of the Brennan Court's (since, for Eisler, Brennan is the intellectual leader of the Warren, Burger, and Rehnquist Courts) decisions we became an increasingly violent, crime-ridden people. Although it is silly to hold Justice Brennan and the Supreme Court accountable for every negative (or positive) social "transformation," current conditions are still a legitimate standard to apply to the life and work of a justice whose jurisprudence is self-consciously guided by a desire to reshape society. And when one uses that standard, a striking contradiction between purpose and result would seem evident. Curiously, this problem is not mentioned or anticipated by Eisler.

Taken together, the decisions of these two legal craftsmen span most of the twentieth century. As the century draws to a close, the questions raised by these judges—the limits of democracy, and the role of the judiciary in policing these limits—remain. In the end, these books remind us of the complex nature of our democracy, and the corresponding need for us to find ways to develop and sustain republican virtue. □

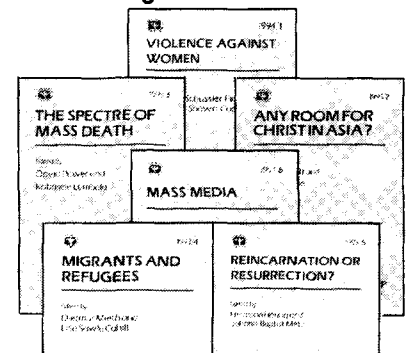
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PETER PAN IN ISRAEL

THE BOOK OF INTIMATE GRAMMAR

David Grossman

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$22, 480 pp.

Paul Gediman

In two previous novels, the Israeli writer David Grossman walked a high wire between sophistication and naïveté, irony and earnestness. He employed elaborate artistic gambits—complex structures, multiple narratives, the whole postmodern arsenal of fragmentation and misdirection—in the service of a prophetic moral vision. To pine for the day, described in the book of Isaiah, when lions will lie down with lambs, is not a particularly complex desire. But to spin from that desire a mature and multivalent novel is just about as difficult as writing gets. Grossman's first novel, *The Smile of the Lamb*, was a flawed but exciting book that took on the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and tied its themes of power and betrayal to a love triangle and a most unusual hostage drama. His second, *See: Under Love*, was a spectacularly imaginative confrontation of the Holocaust whose last line is spectacularly simple: "We asked so little: for a man to live in this world from birth to death and know nothing of war." Lions and lambs, maybe. But, after the novel has been to the belly of the beast and back, that simple prayer becomes meaningful. God may not hear it, but any sentient reader will. Robert Alter wrote, quite rightly, about *See: Under Love*: "It could well be one of the major novels of the post-World War II era, in a class with other phantasmagoric confrontations with contemporary history like *The Tin Drum*, *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, and *Midnight's Children*."

Less sympathetic critics have described Grossman's writing as pretentious or excessive. It certainly is at times, particularly the "Bruno" section of *See: Under Love*,

in which Grossman took the mid-century Polish-Jewish writer, Bruno Schulz, and turned him into a Baltic salmon for nearly a hundred pages. But in Grossman's case, the road of excess does occasionally lead to the palace of wisdom.

Grossman's new novel is neither pretentious nor excessive. And it suffers for it. Lacking the formal sophistication of his two previous novels, grimly humorless, it is hobbled by a shrunken moral vision and, like its protagonist, seems merely stunned by the brutality of the world, preferring censure and retreat to engagement.

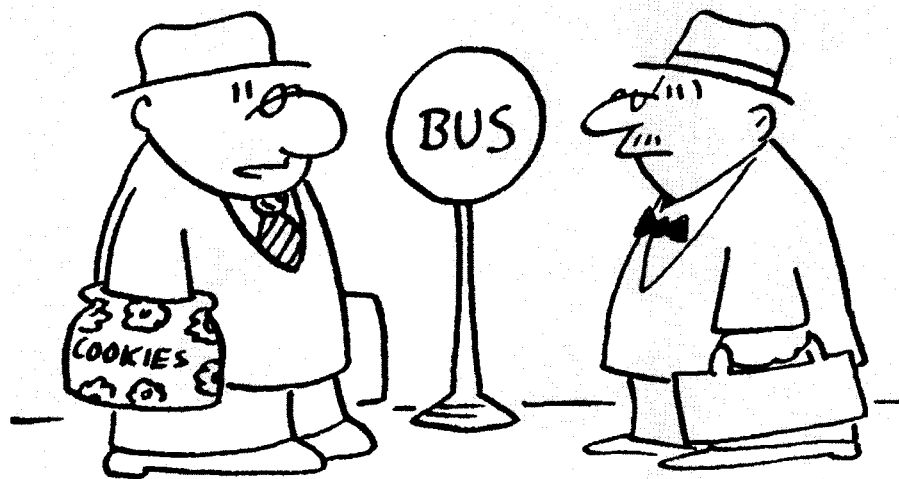
The Book of Intimate Grammar is the story of Jerusalem's Aron Kleinman, whom we meet when he's eleven and follow until 1967, when he's fourteen. Aron lives in a grim apartment block with his coarse, blue-collar parents. We are told (though never credibly shown) that he was once a buoyant child whose imagination kept him and his friends busy with elaborate games of make-believe. His idol is Houdini, and he used to dazzle his pals with escapes. But as his friends gradually get pubic hair and smell different and start noticing girls, Aron remains, physically and emotionally, a child. "Explain one thing," he says to his best friend, Gideon. "I want to understand, because

maybe I'm a little slow, so tell it to me straight, why did it used to be fun to sneak into a strange house two years ago and now suddenly it isn't anymore? What's changed?" Gideon says he doesn't know and then tells Aron that he has to get a hold of himself. Aron's response?

"To hell with you!" screamed Aron savagely. "To hell with all of you. I'll go in alone! All alone!" And he stood up and ran away... he would break into strange houses, and escape out of boxes and trunks and cars, he would stay as he was himself forever.

And so Aron decides to turn his affliction into an asset. Or, rather, he convinces himself that his affliction is a sign of moral superiority. But Aron's problem is not that his friends won't play with him. It's that he's repulsed by the world. He doesn't want to grow up. He finds a deck of pornographic playing cards and, unable to conceive of his father as a sexual being, convinces himself that someone is planting them in the house; he dreads the day when he will receive his father's shaving kit; he decides to make a cat a vegetarian, wanting "to prove that you could prevent a cat from growing up carnivorous."

Later, in a funk over many things, including the fact that his puppy love, Yaeli, might be more interested in Gideon and that she may no longer be content with puppy love, Aron reflects that "having a body is itself a defect." This could be a poignant curse, but Aron's spirit is not com-



"Oh, no—it happened way back when I was a kid."

elling or daring enough to make us care about how it strains against his mortal coil. We just want him to grow up. Near the end of the book, during his final confrontation with Gideon, Aron concocts an elaborate ruse (he says he's casting Gideon for a part in a movie—more childish make-believe) to get his friend to take off his pants and show him his penis. The problem with all this is that it's not written as farce or black comedy. The prose is distinctively Grossman's, which is to say passionate and lyrical and breathless. But his huge Wagnerian chords are a poor accompaniment to the small story. He gives us tympani when what's called for is the brassy irony of a high hat.

Grossman gives us his prose, but he doesn't really give us history in *The Book of Intimate Grammar*. And this is a departure for him. Although the last part of the book takes place against the backdrop of Israel's preparation for the Six Day War, that backdrop is muted. It's a thin thematic ligament that ties Aron's fear of maturity to what we know will happen to Israel after its military victory—or at any rate, to what we know from his nonfiction that Grossman thinks happened: The youthful idealism of Zionism will become corrupted by the brutality of being an occupying power; the moral authority of a nation ingathered from the remnant survivors of the Holocaust will be compromised by Israel's emergence as just another nation-state that derives much of its authority from the barrel of a gun. These are important themes, and there's nobody more qualified than Grossman to worry them through fiction. But he doesn't here. Perhaps Israeli readers don't require him to fill in the blanks the way American readers do. But that doesn't change the fact that Grossman doesn't dramatize the connections between the interiority of his characters and the externality of history the way he did in his two earlier novels.

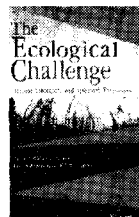
But it's important to note what *The Book of Intimate Grammar* shares with both the previous novels and his nonfiction (*The Yellow Wind*, about Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and *Sleeping on a Wire*, about Israeli Arabs). At the core of all his work is an abiding concern with the value of language. In the

"Bruno" section of *See: Under Love*, just before he turns Bruno Schulz into a salmon, Grossman has him realize that "the Messiah would never come in writing, would never be invoked in a language suffering from elephantiasis. A new grammar and a new calligraphy had first to be invented."

The prophetic part of Grossman wants to tear through the veil of the everyday languages of conversation, politics, and commerce (and, no doubt, criticism, too). He wants to find modes of speech that are more

truthful than the public tongue. In some sense, all of his work is about conversation. Grossman has shown that he can be brilliantly inventive in the ways he gets characters to talk to each other, and in the ways he rubs ideas and themes against one another to create fire. *The Book of Intimate Grammar* does have its moments, and it teems with some beautiful discursive riffs on language and expression, but in the end the only durable conversation in the book is between Aron and himself. And it's not enough. □

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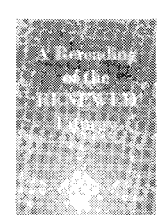


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The Liturgical Press, \$79.50, 1,056 pp.

George G. Higgins

Some weeks ago a journalist asked me to list some of the more significant changes in the area of Catholic social thought and social action that have occurred *post*, if not necessarily *propter*, Vatican II. Since *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought* happened to be on my desk, I pointed to it as one notable example, and when the journalist asked me why, I ran out of superlatives.

At that time, since the *Dictionary* had only recently arrived, I had read only a random sampling of its entries. But now, having read almost all of the approximately 150 entries in this 1,000-page, double-column volume (it took up most of my free time this summer), I realize that, if anything, I was too sparing in my praise of the *Dictionary*. It is the kind of exhaustive work that one could only have dreamed of before the council. It is truly a great achievement and one for which we are deeply indebted to its innovative publisher, the Liturgical Press, to its scholarly editor, Judith A. Dwyer, and its efficient production editor, Bette Montgomery. As

one who has followed the literature in this field rather closely for fifty years, I am awed by Dwyer's ability (obviously in a very short period of time, given the almost up-to-the-minute timeliness of some of the entries), to bring together scholarly articles covering the entire range of Catholic social thought (widely defined) and her ability to recruit highly qualified writers from around the world for each of the entries in the *Dictionary*. One can only marvel at her success in persuading or cajoling them to meet what must have been a very tight deadline.

The purpose and scope of the *Dictionary*



are succinctly summarized by Dwyer as follows in her Introduction:

The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought, testifying to [the] deep solidarity that Christians experience with the human race and its history, seeks to present and analyze the major modern social encyclicals, from Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* to John Paul II's *Centesimus annus*, as well as to inspect central movements, figures, and themes that have been the hallmark of Catholic social thought for over one hundred years.

The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought also attempts to indicate the manifold social dimensions of the various moral issues that confront the human community. The *Dictionary*, therefore, addresses such topics as abortion,

homosexuality, birth control, and euthanasia, in order to emphasize that no issue is purely "sexual," or "biomedical"; all ethical problems contain social ramifications that must be a vital part of any critical evaluation.

Dwyer barely hints at what is perhaps her most important contribution as editor—namely, her success in getting the authors to analyze Catholic social thought in historical context and to get them to highlight its major weaknesses or gaps and, with a look to the future, to point out its unfinished agenda. In this respect, the *Dictionary* meets a refreshingly high standard of intellectual honesty.

Montgomery has also done her work very well as production editor. The type is clear and readable, and the lengthy essays are mercifully divided into manageable segments with accurate subheadings. At the end of each essay there is a helpful list of cross-references and a concise and up-to-date bibliography. The alphabetical listing and identification of the contributors, the complete list of entries, and the concluding Index are also reader-friendly.

The proofreaders at the Liturgical Press have allowed only a handful of insignificant typos to sneak into the text. Their most embarrassing gaffe was to allow "Fascism" to be spelled "Facism" at the top of each page of a rather lengthy essay on this subject, but this can be corrected when the *Dictionary* inevitably goes into a second printing.

To show how little I know about the business of the commercial side of publishing, I close by expressing the (naive?) hope that the publisher will eventually be able to come out with a less expensive softcover edition of the *Dictionary* for the convenience of those who do not have ready access to a well-stocked, up-to-date library. Meanwhile, it is only fair to add that the price of this first hardcover edition, although at first sight it may seem rather high, is in fact a bargain by today's publishing standards when many if not most nonfiction books of one-twentieth or one-thirtieth the length of the *Dictionary* are priced at almost half and in some case more than half of \$79.50. □

REVIEWERS

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

the time, the biggest insurers benefited from an agreement between big business and big labor that the former would insure the latter's medical expenses.

In our economy, prices are determined by a balance of pressures. When, as in this case, the buyer in effect no longer tries to get the lowest price for the service, the seller is left free to raise prices boundlessly. The important thing is that for many years employers gladly wrote off the payments as an expense against income. No physician or hospital sought this; their standing was already quite high without this.

We reap what we sow. Curious, but the best that Congress can do now is to declare all payment of health insurance costs income to the employee. This will restore the competitive pressure and begin to undo the damage done.

SANDOR HALASZ

South Africa's task

Oxford, England

To the Editors: In her article on South Africa's first one-person-one-vote elections ["Relief into Joy," June 3] Rosemary Ridd brilliantly conveyed the responses of the people, black and white, and of the expectations of "imminent improvements" of the majority population hitherto oppressed by the apartheid state. By now the early euphoria has passed and change may seem disappointingly slow, but already there is much less violence and fear in most areas.

Ms. Ridd referred to the formidable task confronting South Africa, with 40 percent unemployment, 60 percent illiteracy, millions of homeless.

It is worth noting that before the election the African National Congress (ANC) had formed commissions and research groups to prepare a reconstruction and development program to address these problems. In a speech noting the end of his first 100 days in office, President Nelson Mandela said that his government of national unity has brought bitter enemies together to work toward the transformation

of their country. On the agenda are such measures as a public works program, education and training, scientific development, rebuilding of the townships, land reform, free medical care for children and pregnant women, and a major clinic-building program.

Great emphasis is placed on "mass involvement"—mobilizing the people to take part through community-based organizations, including the churches, which have already played a major role in working for change. A problem here is that many of the grassroots leaders are now in government posts where they are no longer in constant touch with the people who elected them. New leaders will have to be trained, and after decades of confrontation both old and new leaders must adapt to new roles.

We in the West must also adapt, changing from opposition to support for the new South Africa, buying its products and encouraging investment while insisting on equitable wages and fair living conditions. In his 100 days' speech, Mr. Mandela mentioned legislation against racism now being prepared, but pointed out that "legislation on its own cannot change atti-

tudes." We in other countries know that it takes years to change racist attitudes. Now we can look hopefully to South Africa, which has suffered more than any other nation from institutionalized racial division, to lead the world toward a more tolerant and more united human race.

MARGARET STANTON

The writer is secretary of the Oxford Anti-Apartheid Group.

Misled by the Spirit?

Sacramento, Calif.

To the Editors: When Patricia M. Leiper alleges, in her letter on women's ordination, that "the pope's grasp of the evidence from Scripture and early church history is faulty" [Correspondence, September 9], her major thesis seems to be "the Bible is the sole rule of faith." Luther's greatest error. For that matter, not one of the examples she cites from Scripture demonstrates the ordination of women by either Christ or the Apostles. And she completely overlooks the Catholic doctrine of apostolic tradition.

Apostolic tradition is a continuation of the preaching and actions of the Apostles,

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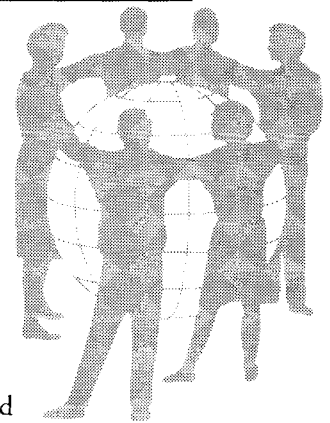
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an activity exercised within the church whereby the totality of truth communicated originally by Christ and the Spirit to the Apostles is preserved and presented.

If the ordination of women is not clearly shown by either Scripture or apostolic tradition, then what other authority does the church have for adopting it? That is the main thrust of John Paul II's position. To say his grasp of Scripture and early church history is faulty raises a serious question: Have Christ and the Spirit misled the Apostles and the church for the past two millennia? BERNARD V. BERONIO

Who can 'image' Christ?

Hyde Park, Mass.

To the Editors: In the current lively debate about the ordination of women, large amounts of emotional and intellectual energy are being expended on the question of whether women can "image" Christ, can act "in the person of Christ." I am afraid that the debate phrased in these terms not only encourages poor sacramental theology but inadvertently furthers the patriarchy rightly condemned by many women.

To explain: First, the term "priest." There is but one priest of the new dispensation, Jesus Christ. Calling people in the second rank of orders "priests" is an unfortunate misnomer. I don't expect that most Catholics will refer to "priests" as presbyters any time soon, but many official documents already do so. The reference to presbyters as priests probably comes from centuries of the church's identifying ordained men with Christ, particularly at the consecration of the Mass and in the sacrament of reconciliation.

Which leads to my second point, that it is not the presider at the Eucharist who "images" or "sacramentalizes" Christ. It is the believing church that represents Christ, and in that church that the presence of Christ primarily resides. The bishop or presbyter who presides at the Eucharist exercises a ministry of leadership, leading the assembly, with its many other ministers, in orderly worship. Ideally this is a continuation of the leadership she or he provides to the community during the rest of the week.

Now, it can be extremely damaging to the mental health of ordained Christians to be told that they are Jesus Christ. When Catholics are exposed to the anger of a confessor; when parish councils have to deal with a pastor who has all the answers; when a Sunday assembly finds itself only reluctantly admitted to the presider's Eucharist, chances are the presbyter in question entertains illusions of a special identity with Christ. A sure formula for the continuation of patriarchy among the ordained, men or women, is to by-pass the place of the whole church in the exercise of their ministry. But accepting a leadership ministry to a body of loving, believing people who together are the presence of the risen Lord in the world can be wonderfully challenging and healthily enriching for both the church and its ordained leaders.

(REV.) WILLIAM H. McLAUGHLIN

Waiting at the tomb

Rolesville, N.C.

To the Editors: Lois Spear's article ["The Sisters Still Teach," June 17] captures well the anxiety that many feel at the demise of institutional religious life as the church and Western culture have known it in the last millennium. The community she describes is one of many that try to watch faithfully at the tomb. There is a crucial witness in this time of darkness.

Since we don't yet know what the nature of our resurrection will be, ours must be an accompaniment in faith. We yearn for the dawn. It may glimmer in the many small groups and networks that are arising, often ecumenical, noncanonical, only loosely connected with the institutional church. One thinks of the Catholic Worker movement, the Grail, the numerous peace and justice groups, associates being spun off traditional communities of women.

How will we know when it has arrived—the new form of religious life that can be sustained in a diaspora rather than a Catholic culture? Perhaps we will know it only in its fruits, not in its structures. Recently, one of our sisters, a great risk-taker in faith, died of a brain tumor. A friend and colleague recalls saying to her before the end, "It's been an adventure, Mary." Mary responded, "A sacred

adventure." Whatever networks or other new entities foster the vision of the sacred adventure may signal the shape of religious vocation in the future. That kind of vision in our kind of culture is no less than a miracle.

EVELYN MATTERN, SFCC

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Doubting Thomas

DENNIS M. DOYLE

found myself wondering the other day if my twelve-year-old son, Thomas, might not grow up to be a plantation owner in Latin America.

Thomas has a deal worked out with the neighbors across the street that he will water their gardens while they are on vacation for \$2.50 a day. Since Thomas himself had to be out of town for part of the time, he subcontracted the work to his younger brothers. Thomas offered to pay the ten-year-old, Michael, \$1.25 per day. For days that Michael couldn't do it, he wanted to pay the eight-year-old, Patrick, nothing, but finally agreed to \$.50 per day. (I'm surprised that he didn't figure out a way to charge the five-year-old, Christopher, a fee for letting him watch his brothers work.)

I caught wind of these dealings and intervened. At first I argued that whoever worked should receive the entire \$2.50. After some hard feelings and some arguing, I offered to compromise at \$2 per day, with Thomas keeping fifty cents. Although I felt that this would violate a basic principle, I saw it as a move in a positive direction.

Thomas would not agree to this offer, and just kept getting more and more upset. I finally said that I would discuss the matter with our neighbor, collect the money, and distribute it myself.

Thomas was furious. He said I had no right to interfere. If he were hitting his brothers, cussing them out, or otherwise abusing them, he would understand that I should get involved. But this was simply a business deal between his brothers and himself, and I should keep my nose out of it.

At this point I brought up to Thomas the principle of Catholic social teaching that although the government should not interfere unnecessarily in arrangements be-

tween individuals, still the government (in this case, me) has a role to play in trying to alleviate injustices. Thomas countered that since his brothers agreed to the deal, there was no injustice.

I brought up the teaching from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* that legal contracts can be unjust if they result from negotiations between unequal partners. That a contract is legal and both parties

agree doesn't guarantee that it is just or moral.

Thomas said that this is the nineties, and he isn't interested in all that old teaching. I retorted that *Rerum novarum* was written in 1891, which was the nineties. Thomas said, "I mean the 1990s."

I summed up my case. Thomas was taking advantage of his brothers. In politics they call this "exploitation." His brothers deserve a larger share of the profits from the work they actually perform. Their consent to low wages doesn't make the deal a just one.

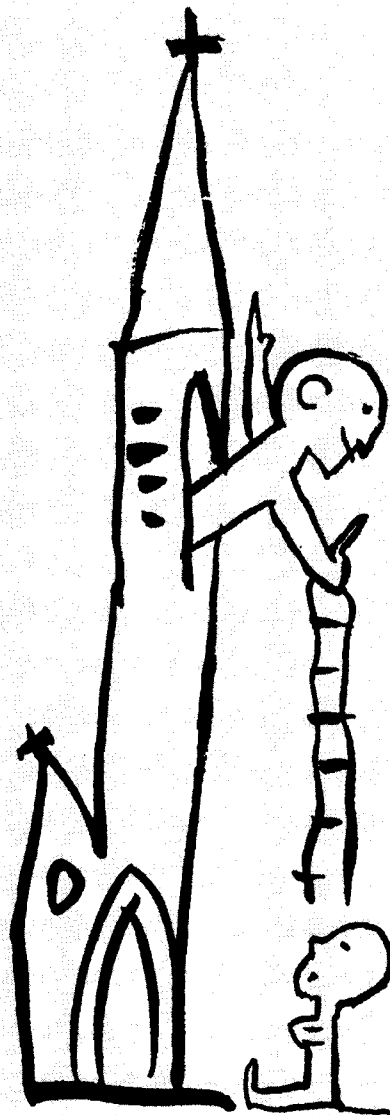
Thomas argued that they don't really need the money as much as he does. They were too young to have important things to spend it on. I said this was a rationalization—a fabricated "reason" that really was no reason at all. I said that if he were interested at all in being Catholic and reading the Bible he would want to rise above his current position and do the right thing.

Thomas fumed that he was tired of all this Bible stuff; after all the Bible was written a thousand years ago and why should he be interested in it today? I reminded him that the New Testament was written about two thousand years ago, and the Old Testament before that, and that even if he rejected the Bible and Christianity he should still be interested in being a good person. Thomas said that he didn't have to care about that, that he wasn't like me, and that he could think what he wants.

I let him stomp off. I figured that no matter how difficult it is to have an exploiter of laborers for a son, it must feel downright oppressive to have a religion teacher for a dad. □

Dennis M. Doyle teaches ecclesiology at the University of Dayton.

Editor's note: A difficult ethical question arises. What percentage of the fee for this article should go to the author's sons?



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